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# POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF THE

# REV. JOHN HARRIS, D.D.

EDITED BY THE

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# Works by John Harris, D. D.,

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# SERMONS

ON

# SPECIAL OCCASIONS.

BY

REV. JOHN HARRIS, D. D.,

LATE PRESIDENT OF NEW COLLEGE, LONDON; AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT TEACHER," "THE GREAT COMMISSION," "PRE-ADAMITE EARTH," "MAN PRIMEVAL," "PATRIARCHY," ETC. ETC.

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# PREFACE.

THE Discourses contained in this volume are a portion of those delivered on various special occasions during the period of their lamented Author's highest reputation as a Preacher.

No attempt has been made to specify the places and times of their delivery. The subjects treated, and the mode of treating them, raise them above the limits of such associations. Most of them will be recognized, from their own internal evidence, as adapted for Missionary services, or for the openings of places of worship.

They are arranged in an order which, it is hoped, will exhibit to the reader, in a progressive development, those great first principles of Divine truth and evangelical Christianity—beginning in the perfections of God, and culminating in the glories of

Christ—which the Preacher ever made the sole foundation of his appeals for personal consecration and entire devotion to the cause of the Redeemer.

Only two points have caused the Editor any serious difficulty. Some passages had been marked, in a slight and temporary manner, for omission, evidently for no other reason than to make the Sermon shorter for delivery. Such passages are generally restored. Other passages were found to have been repeated in different Sermons. These have been removed from one or other of the Discourses in which they occurred, when they were of considerable length, and when they could be spared from the context. But, in a few cases, where the repeated passage seemed an essential part of the whole argument, the Editor has not felt himself justified in mutilating a Sermon to avoid a double presentation of the same thoughts, or even the same words. Such repetitions may well be borne with by the reader. They have been practised by the great orators of all ages; and much instruction may be derived from their comparison by the reader who wishes to form a critical estimate of the Author's work.

But, doubtless, the great majority of readers will receive these Discourses in far other than a critical spirit. Many will thankfully recognize, and thoughtfully ponder, the truths which they gladly received

from the Preacher's living voice, and will revive the impression of his fleeting words. Others will learn, for the first time, a *part* of the source of his reputation and usefulness—would that the *other elements* of fervour and power could be embodied in these pages! May all share in those emotions of glory to God, of love to the Saviour, and consecration to His cause which it was the one aim of the Preacher—as the instrument of God's Holy Spirit—to excite in his hearers' hearts!

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# SERMON I.

## THE GOSPEL THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION.

ROM. i. 16, 17—"*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;*"—it is *that* through which the power of God is manifested in saving every one that believes—"*to the Jew first*"—to him it is offered in the first instance—"*and also to the Greek*"—or Gentile. "*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*"—therein is revealed to our faith the doctrine of justification, or acceptance with God—of interest in a Divine righteousness, acquired by faith alone. "*As it is written*"—in the Old Testament—"*the just by faith shall live.*"

POWER was a subject welcome and familiar to the Roman; but then it was martial power, the power of conquest and destruction. His city was proudly denominated STRENGTH; but then it was strength to resist invasion, and to wield the sovereignty of the sword. By its very constitution the Roman State was nothing else than a well-organized school of war—a permanent establishment for conquest. Hence its prophetic symbol was a beast "whose teeth were of iron and his nails of brass;" and of this monster-power it was predicted, "it shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces."

Here, however, the apostle speaks of the advent of a different kind of power—of a comparatively new thing in the earth—a benevolent power—a power, not to destroy, but to save—"the power of God unto salvation." And, what must have appeared equally novel—the apostle describes the *instrument* of this saving power as consisting simply in a

*truth* or *principle* to be *believed*. For the doctrine of the text is this, that the salvation of men can be effected by the Gospel alone—and that the saving power of the Gospel lies in the Cross—in the doctrine of justification by faith in a crucified Redeemer.

Now, we shall probably illustrate this idea by shewing, that of all powerful things, *thoughts, opinions,* or *doctrines* —things to be believed and acted on—are the *most* powerful:—that of all opinions or doctrines, those partaking of a *moral* or *spiritual* nature are the most powerful:—that of all such doctrines, *Christian* doctrine, or the GOSPEL, is the most powerful:—that of all the doctrines of the Gospel, the mightiest is the doctrine of *justification by faith in Christ:* —and that the persuasion of this fact should induce us cordially to embrace it, and earnestly to promote its diffusion among others.

## I.

First, then, we have to shew that of all powerful things, ideas or doctrines—things to be believed and acted on—are the most powerful. This is not the general opinion of power. In our ordinary notions of power, we are apt to associate with it ideas of brute force—of large masses of men or of matter bearing down all before them by mere physical might. The explosion of a globe like our own, for instance, could we witness such an event, would give us a sublime idea of the power which effected it. But the man of intelligent reflection is aware, that the power which prevents such an explosion is mightier still. Power is calm, regular, and majestic in its movements. It can afford to be so. It does not need to be noisy, anxious, hasty. These are signs of weakness. Power speaks, and it is done—commands, and it stands fast for ever. The utter breaking up and destruction of the material universe would be nothing, as a display of power, compared with the might of that influence by which the great system is at this moment noiselessly upheld, and

each of its unnumbered worlds kept in its mighty pathway through boundless space.

On the same principle, all the great changes of society are produced—not by laws, kings, or armies, as is generally supposed, and as popular history would have it believed:—they are produced by the operation of a power stronger than all these—a power which no fires can burn, no armies destroy—but which is able itself to extinguish the one and to annihilate the other—the power of thought, of opinions, and principles. These are the true sovereigns of the world—the empire of the world has, in a sense, been given to them; and all other forms of power are only their creatures. The strongest law is only a certain idea taking the form of a rule, and enforcing itself by sanctions; and the most powerful army that ever devastated the earth was only a thought or principle embodied, armed, and bent on triumphing by violence. And as opinions and principles are the most mighty, so are they the most *enduring* things. What will eventually be known of the last great conqueror who quitted the earth, Napoleon, but that he enacted a code of laws? Time has already proved, as he himself proudly foretold, that his laws would be remembered when his victories were forgotten. What do we now know, or possess, of most of the great nations of antiquity, but some of their thoughts? These, transmitted in books, are living, and are moving society still. Alexander, indeed, astounded and conquered the world, and his name fills a vast space in its subsequent history. But while the earth was resounding with his exploits, Aristotle, his tutor, was silently achieving the mightier conquest of the human mind. The Macedonian empire was soon dismembered and extinct; but the mental empire of the philosopher continued vigorous and entire for more than two thousand years, and is far from being destroyed yet.

## II.

But, secondly, of all the thoughts or principles which agi-

tate and revolutionize society, the mightiest are those which partake of a moral or spiritual nature. They are then based on all that is most profound and central in human nature, and draw to themselves the whole depth and mass of our being.

A spiritual truth is greater than a throne, and subverts thrones. It has a throne of its own in the spirit and souls of men. "There is no power on earth"—said one of the greatest of men—"that setteth up a throne or chair of state in the spirits or souls of men, but this only." It *has* then a throne of its own—God Himself deigns to sit in it, and to suspend His sceptre over it. From that lofty and guarded seat, where none can return the blow, truth strikes and assails as from heaven. And as it enlists in its cause the spiritual and unwearied part of humanity—that part of our nature which cannot be fatigued—it needs no pause, allows no truce, entails its quarrel from generation to generation. Better for its foes to encounter an army than a truth; *that* they might annihilate, but *this* is immortal—*this* gathers strength from conflict, authority from suffering, final victory from present defeat. Hence the fierce, the unforgiving, the undying hatred they have poured out on the person, the ashes, the memory of its champions—especially of its *first* champions—not merely killing them piecemeal, but hunting for their bones years after to reduce them to ashes, and blackening their memory with the most concentrated venom of infernal malice.

But what to Truth was this? At the stake she becomes an oracle—gives to her martyrs joys stronger than fire—and speaks to the sympathies of the multitude in tones of authority which drown the logic of the schools. At the moment of her supposed defeat—like her Lord, "the Truth"—she is in the sepulchre putting on her panoply for the final fight. The car of persecution rolls on, fancying that she is dead—when, lo, at the moment she was supposed to be festering in her shroud, she speaks to it from heaven, out of the midst

of a light brighter than that of the midday sun—arrests its progress, disarms its warriors, and enlists them as champions in her own service.

A glorious thing is a great spiritual truth—and an eventful moment is that in which it makes its advent among a people; and mighty is he *to* whom it first comes, or *by* whom it first speaks to them—mightier, not than ten men merely that have it not, or than ten thousand, but than all men that have it not. Such a man was Luther; he uttered a truth—a simple truth—and the Papal throne has never since ceased to tremble with the vibration. Such a man was Huss. And such a man, more pre-eminent than all, was our own Wickliffe, whose opinions still gather strength, and go on smiting and shivering to pieces more than one image of iron and brass. And such a man is the Christian minister or missionary who first takes the Gospel into a heathen land. He who first brought the Gospel to Britain did more than Cæsar; the Roman power soon passed away from amongst us: but the power of the Truth remains; and our history ever since it came has in fact been nothing but the history of that truth, struggling for its right place and power among us.

## III.

Now, this reminds us, thirdly, that, of all moral or spiritual truth, Christian truth is the most powerful. Examine its history, and you will find that even where Christianity has, for obvious reasons, produced but slender *spiritual* results, the inferior benefits which it has scattered have rendered its progress through the nations as traceable as the overflowing of the Nile is by the rich deposit and the consequent fertility which it leaves behind. This is a well-known subject of devout exultation in many of the inspired epistles. The apologies of the fathers prove it, and the records of profane history unintentionally but abundantly confirm it. Virtue went out of it in every age, and wherever it came. The Roman empire was rushing to ruin; Christianity arrested its descent, and

broke its fall. Nearly all the tribes of Europe were sitting at a feast on human flesh, or immolating human victims to their gods. It called them away from the horrid repast, and extinguished their unholy fires. The northern invasion poured a new world of barbarism over Christian lands. The spirit of Christianity brooded over the chaotic mass, and gradually gave to it the forms of civilized life. Where it could not sheathe the sword of war, it at least humanized the dreadful art. It found the servant a slave, and broke his chains. It found the poor—the mass of mankind—trampled under foot, and it taught them to stand erect by addressing whatever is divine in their degraded nature. It found woman—one-half of the species—in the dust, and it extended its protecting arm to her weakness, and raised and placed her by the side of man. Sickly infancy and infirm old age were cast out to perish; it passed by and bade them live, preparing for each a home, and becoming the tender nurse of both. Yes, Christianity found the heathen world without a single house of mercy. Go, search the Byzantine chronicles and the pages of Publius Victor, and though the one describes all the public edifices of ancient Constantinople, and the other of ancient Rome, not a word is to be found in either of a purely charitable institution. Go, search the ancient marbles in your museums, question the many travellers who have visited the ruined cities of Greece and Rome, and descend and ransack the graves of Herculaneum and Pompeii, and say, if, amidst all the splendid remains of statues and amphitheatres—temples, aqueducts, and palaces—mausoleums, columns, and triumphal arches—a single fragment or inscription has been found telling us that it belonged to a refuge for human want, or for the alleviation of human misery. The *first* voluntary and public collection ever known to have been made in the heathen world for a charitable object was made by the churches of Macedonia for the poor saints in Jerusalem. The first individual who built an hospital for the poor was a Christian widow. Go, search the lexicons for interpreting the ancient

Greek authors, and you will not find even the names which divine Christianity wanted by which to designate her houses of charity: she had to invent them. Language had never been called on to embody such conceptions of mercy. All the asylums of the earth belong to her.

And be it remembered that Christianity has accomplished much of this under circumstances the most unfriendly to success. As yet it has had but a very limited influence, even in what are denominated Christian countries. But yet, while bleeding herself at a thousand pores, she has saved whole tribes from extermination, and comparatively stanched the flow of human blood. Though a prisoner herself, and walking in chains, she has yet gone through the nations, proclaiming liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Even when Popery had converted her creed into a libel on her name, that creed yet contained truths which eclipsed the wisdom of Greece, and which consigned the mythology of Rome to the amusement and ridicule of childhood. Even *there*, where her character was most misunderstood, so high had she raised the standard of morals, that Socrates, the boast of Greece, would have been deemed impure, and Titus, the darling of Rome and of mankind, would have been denounced as a monster of cruelty. When disfigured to a degree which would have made it difficult for her great apostle to have recognised her, yet, like him, she went about "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Herself the victim of universal selfishness, she yet left on every shore which she visited everlasting monuments that she had been there, in the hospitals and edifices of charity which lifted up their heads, and in the softening and healing influences which stole over the heart of society.

2. But why do we speak of other lands? Britain itself owes everything, under God, to the influence of the Gospel. The cruelties of Rome did not humanize, nor the northern superstitions enlighten us. The missionary who first trod our

shores found himself standing in the very temple of Druidism; and wherever he turned, he heard the din of its noisy festivals, saw the obscenity of its lascivious rites, and beheld its animal and human victims. But Christianity had marked the island for its own. And although its lofty purposes are yet far from being worked out on us, from that eventful moment to the present the various parts of our social system have been rising together. Even when most at rest, its influence has been silently penetrating the heart of society. When most enfeebled and corrupted itself, its morality has been checking the progress of our social corruption, rendering power more protective and law more righteous. When most disguised and repressed, its wisdom has been modifying our philosophy and teaching a loftier system of its own. A Howard, sounding and circumnavigating the ocean of human misery, is only an obedient agent of its philanthropy. A Clarkson and a Wilberforce have only given utterance to its tender and righteous appeals for the slave. A Raikes, a Bell, and a Lancaster have simply remembered its long-neglected injunction, "Suffer little children to come unto me;" while all its Sabbaths, Bibles, and direct evangelical ministrations are only the appropriate instrumentality by which it has ever been seeking to become the power of God to our salvation, and preparing us for the office to which Providence is now distinctly calling us—to be the Christian ministers and missionaries of mankind.

3. But why speak we of what the Gospel *has* done? At this moment it is doing for other lands what it has done for us. Repair to the distant missionary field, and we can point out to you happy homes and peaceful villages rising amidst wastes where lately man roamed, restless and ferocious as the beasts with which he contended for supremacy; to multitudes, whose hands were but yesterday red with the blood of their fellows, now diligently busied in the arts of civilized life; to thousands of children and adults, trooping to their respective schools, where, a short time ago, all the visible signs of a language

were utterly unknown; to organized societies and the reign of law, where, but recently, to be lawless was reckoned essential to enjoyment, and to kill at pleasure the highest prerogative; to sober, honest, highly moralized countries, where lately rage and intemperance revelled at will; to tribes which, till lately, never met but for mutual destruction, but whose intercourse now consists entirely in the reciprocation of benefits and tokens of love; to the animalized savage acting the man; to the debased slave now walking at large as an heir of freedom; to degraded woman raised from the dust and restored to be the partner of man; to hundreds of thousands rescued from the curse of the darkest idolatry, brought into the light of truth, and surrounded with the means of social improvement and unending happiness! What vast tracts has it rescued from barbarism, and with what creations of benevolence has it clothed them! How many thousands, whom ignorance and selfishness had branded as the leavings and refuse of the species, if not actually akin to the beasts that perish, are at this moment rising under its fostering care, ascribing their enfranchisement, under God, to its benign interposition, taking encouragement from its smiles to assume the port and bearing of men, and by their acts and aspirations retrieving the character and dignity of the slandered human form! When did *literature* accomplish so much for nations destitute of a written language? or *education* pierce and light up so large and dense a mass of human ignorance? When did *humanity* save so many lives, or cause so many sanguinary "wars to cease"? How many a sorrow has it soothed—how many an injury arrested—and how many an asylum has it reared, amidst scenes of wretchedness and oppression, for the orphan, the outcast, and the sufferer! When did *liberty* ever rejoice in a greater triumph than that which Christian instrumentality has been the means of achieving? or *civilization* find so many sons of the wilderness learning her arts, and agriculture, and commerce? or *law* receive so much voluntary homage from those who

but yesterday were strangers to the name? By erecting a standard of morality, how vast the amount of crime which it has been the means of preventing! By asserting the claims of degraded woman, how powerful an instrument of social regeneration is it preparing for the future! And by doing all this by the principle and power of all moral order and excellence—the Gospel of Christ—how large a portion of the world's chaos has that instrumentality restored to light, and harmony, and peace!

## IV.

But all this, you will say, only proves that the Gospel is the power of God to the civilization—to the social improvement—to the temporal salvation of man, whereas the text contemplates the salvation of the soul. We admit it. And what, we ask—what must the *fruit* of that tree be, the very *leaves* of which are so efficacious for the healing of the nations? What must be the *full might* of that benevolent principle, of which all this is only, in a sense, the accidental effect? And what must be the nature of *that* doctrine, the result of which when truly believed throws all these temporal results into the shade? Now, this reminds us, fourthly, that of all the truths to be found in the Gospel, the doctrine of the Cross—or of justification by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ—is the mightiest. As we have just seen, its benevolent *morality* may be mighty—may check unnumbered evils, unveil the deformity of vice, restore the lost influence of shame, and thus gradually diminish crime, and raise the moral tone of society. But man wants more than this. He may be moralized, without being converted; and he needs conversion—salvation. The text both implies this, and provides for it. For, in saying that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation," what is it but implying that there is an antagonist power at work in the world—the power of Satan to destruction? reminding us of the terrible might of that power, since nothing less than the power of God is regarded

as a match for it. So that if the Gospel be so potent as to deserve to be called nothing less than *the power of God to salvation*, it is just because sin is so mighty as the power of Satan to destruction.

And here be it carefully remarked that the doctrine of the Cross triumphs, not in the same way as other kinds of truth produce their results—by its mere fitness to convince the judgment, and approve itself to the mind. We believe, indeed, that the Gospel has this fitness—that light is not more suited to the eye than the entire system of evangelical truth is exquisitely adapted to the original principles of human nature; and we believe that, owing to this inherent adaptation alone, the Gospel can produce the mightiest moral results—all that temporal and social improvement of which we have been speaking—without the aid of any special supernatural influence; and we believe that because of this inherent adaptation it is that God employs it to produce the great spiritual result of salvation. But then, we believe that, in the production of this result, its mere adaptation alone would leave it quite impotent; that here it encounters a kind and a degree of resistance which renders a Divine agency indispensable; that here the influence of the Spirit comes into operation; and that on this account it is called the power of God, because God alone renders it powerful to salvation.

But before we proceed to shew that the Gospel is thus mighty, the text suggests two or three previous inquiries:—

1. *What is the secret of its saving influence?* In other words, what is that adaptation by which it operates in the hand of the Spirit on the mind of the sinner, so as to restore him to holiness? The apostle replies by saying, that "therein is the doctrine of justification by faith revealed to faith."

Now, in attempting to shew how this doctrine produces this result, it is somewhat disheartening to reflect that we are speaking to those to whom the subject has necessarily become comparatively trite, and every mode of presenting it perfectly familiar. The very facility with which the under-

standing apprehends our meaning, and the readiness with which the judgment admits it, allows no time for the sublime truth to settle down upon the heart. In order, therefore, to do anything like justice to the subject, it is necessary that the individual supposed to be subjected to the influence in question should be taken, not from among ourselves, but from a region where the power, and even the name of the Gospel is unknown. Christianity is the only successful antagonist which sin has ever encountered. In order, therefore, to exhibit its influence fully, he should be taken from the darkness and distance of nature, where sin had operated on him unchecked, working out all its deadly effects, and reducing him to its dreadful purposes; and he should be brought with all his depravity and guilt upon him into the full light and under the direct power of the Gospel.

Now, in this state he is chiefly assailable at three points. Entrenched and fortified in evil as he may appear to be, there are yet three sides, so to speak, on which he may be approached with irresistible effect,—his *immortality*, his *guilt*, and his *infinite danger*. These are subjects relating to parts and principles of his nature which an unthinking world overlooks,—it has little or nothing by which it could appeal to them if it would,—and yet they lie at the very foundation of his constitution. So that whoever shall succeed in making him sensible of his immortality, in alarming his conscience to the danger to which all that immortality is exposed by sin, and then in delivering him from the whole, will necessarily acquire a master influence over his whole nature for ever. Now, the Gospel does this. It does not affect a part of his nature merely. It does not operate superficially on the senses; nor convince his judgment, and leave his heart uninterested; nor move his passions merely, to the neglect of his judgment and his will. It goes in and down to the depths of his nature. It goes directly to move that which moves the whole man.

The world hides a man from himself,—conceals from him the most important part of his nature. By shutting out the prospect of eternity, he loses sight of his immortality; and by constantly appealing to his senses, and thus keeping in exercise only the inferior part of his nature, he tends to settle down into a mere creature of time. But the first effect, perhaps, which the Gospel produces is to reveal him to himself. By coming to him as a message from another world, he starts into a consciousness of his relation to that world; and by addressing itself to the spiritual part of his nature, he becomes sensible, however vaguely at first, that he is in some way related to the spiritual, the infinite, and the eternal. Now, it is obvious how this very first impression, by throwing open, if I may so say, a part of the temple of his nature, which had been hitherto shut up—the very sanctuary containing the symbol of Divinity—prepares him to receive with deep effect every other communication which may come to him from the same quarter.

Not only does the world conceal from a man his spiritual and immortal nature, by allowing it to fall into disuse,—it tends, also, to merge the fact of his *individual* accountableness—his *distinct personal* responsibility. From living in society, and finding his interests and relations inseparably complicated with those of others, he comes to think of himself only as an undistinguishable part of a great whole. He loses himself in the crowd. But the Gospel individualizes and detaches. It tells him of *a law* by which all the laws of society are themselves to be judged, but of which his life has been an unceasing violation—of *a book* in which his personal history is recorded moment by moment —of *a Being* who can disentangle and detach him from all his complicated relations, and assign to his every thought and word its precise character—and of *a place and a punishment* so exactly and necessarily resulting from his guilt, and proportioned to it, that he is the only being in the universe to whom they could be assigned. The only way,

therefore, in which it *can* treat with him is in person. It lays its awakening and arresting hand on his personal conscience. It demands a personal interview—a conference in the centre of his nature. It brings forward his guilt into the strong light of distinct consciousness. Even if the Gospel allowed him to act by another, his own conscience is now too deeply interested to permit it. All his faculties and powers seem collected into a point—the entire soul becomes conscience; and all that conscience is against him—accuser, witness, and judge. As if the judgment had been set, and the books opened; as if his personal case were already adjudged, his doom pronounced, and he himself suspended over the bottomless gulf—he feels that he is lost. His nature is now stirred to its depths, and his soul is one region of alarm. Mere *sympathy* now will receive his deep, deep gratitude—*deliverance* would secure his heart for ever. The being who shall now arrive to his rescue will infallibly acquire an influence over the whole man, and may calculate on his allegiance for ever.

To ask if the world, or any person or power belonging to it, can extend the aid which the crisis demands, would be sheer impertinence. *That* is the very power which has brought on the crisis, and from which he requires to be rescued. So completely is he now detached from it in heart and hope, that he turns round, and looks back on it, with wonder at its infatuation, aversion for its sins, and yearning pity for its state. The cloud which threatens him with its bolt impends also over it. What *must* he do to be saved?

In the absence of all the objects he has been accustomed to confide in—in the clear and open space which their withdrawment has left around him, behold the Cross! All the forms of terror and ministers of justice which his sins had armed against him, blend and melt into a form of love dying for his rescue! The Cross has received the lightnings of the impending cloud, and has painted upon it the bow of hope.

To his anxious inquiry, what he must do to be saved—the Cross echoes back, *Be saved;* and every object around him joyfully repeats, *saved!* Then God is love, and the Cross is the stupendous expedient by which He harmonizes that love with the rectitude of His government! Then the sinner need not perish—and the Cross is the amazing means of his salvation. Had it ever been his lot to gaze on the appalling spectacle of an ordinary crucifixion, the sight would probably have left an image on his mind never to be effaced. Is it possible, then, that he can behold "Jesus Christ, evidently set forth crucified before his eyes"—that he can know the dignity of the sufferer, as God manifest in the flesh—can believe that He hates the sin as deeply as He loves the sinner—can reflect that the effect of His death is to be his own deliverance—and can look into the heart of this great mystery and find it to be love, without experiencing a change? If every word which he hears spoken, even by a fellow-man, leaves some impression on his mind, can he hear that he is saved, and believe that the voice which assures him of salvation is the voice of God, without feeling it thrill through every faculty of his soul? If every object and event he may witness produces *some* effect on his character, is it possible that the event which is to affect his whole being for ever—which, for him, shuts for ever the gate of hell, and throws open and fills with visions of glory the ample spaces of eternity—should produce only a transient and slender impression? Must he not, by necessity of nature, love Him, without whom he would soon have had nothing in the universe to love—but have been eternally hateful, even to himself? Must he not render obedience to Him, without whom the chains of his slavery would soon have been riveted for ever? He waits not for a reply—he needs not a command. He is under the mastery of a principle which is its own law—a principle of boundless gratitude and love. The power of the Cross has moved the primary forces of his nature—the springs of hope and fear, of adoration and love. The world has lost him.

His heart is at the feet of Christ. He dates life and happiness from the transition. Henceforth he moves in a region of which the Cross is the central object, and where the benignant and attractive influences which stream from it in all directions hold him in willing and delighted allegiance.

Here, then, is the secret of that supreme influence which the Gospel exercises over the man whom the world had debased, and sin had ruined; and this, if I may say so, is the line of truth along which the Spirit of God delights to operate. By acquainting him with his immortality, it in effect gives him a soul, and gives it on the threshold of a new, an eternal world. By acquainting him with his responsibility and guilt, it calls his conscience from the dead. And then, by unveiling to him the mystery of the Cross, by which that guilt is cancelled, and that immortality entitled to heaven, one overpowering sentiment subjects his whole nature to the authority of Christ.

2. Now, this representation of the manner in which the Gospel becomes the power of God unto salvation, answers, in effect, another question suggested by the text—*To whom does it prove thus divinely efficacious?*—"To every one that believeth."—But is there not a feeling in the heart of the unrenewed sinner which often revolts at this arrangement—a feeling of displeasure, as if faith might have been dispensed with—as if it were an unnecessary requirement, made only in the exercise of an arbitrary authority—as if salvation would have been quite possible, and much easier and better, without it—and a feeling which, if put into words, would amount to this, It is very hard that we cannot be saved without *this believing, this faith?*

A feeling, indeed, very much akin to this, though much less virulent and violent, will be found existing in the human heart against every arrangement of Providence in which an exercise of thought and will is required. "It is very hard," says the human heart, "that we cannot be rich without industry"—and hence the origin of alchemy and gambling.

"It is very hard that we cannot purchase foresight without experience, knowledge, and reflection"—and hence arose astrology, and all the pretended methods of foretelling the future. "And it is very hard that we cannot be happy hereafter without faith and holiness here"—hence idolatry, superstition, popery, penances, and the substitution of all kinds of ceremonies in religion. But in opposition to all these, the Gospel holds on its way through the world, demanding faith—and replying to the important inquiry, "Who will be saved?"—"Every one that believeth."

And why so? Not that there is any special efficacy in faith itself, considered as an exercise of the mind; but because it is the organ of reception—the first and simple means of contact between the mind and the truth or error brought before it. I say *the truth or error;* for *belief* is as necessary to the *efficacious* reception of the one as of the other. Yes, faith is as indispensably necessary to destruction as it is to salvation—faith in *falsehood,* in the *world,* in *Satan.* Only, alas! *such* faith is congenial to our fallen nature; while faith, *the* faith of the Gospel, requires implantation by a hand from heaven. Still it is true, that without faith or belief there would have been no destruction. When Satan brought the first lie into the world, he might have said, "He that believes it shall be condemned"—the great question was, whether man would believe Satan in preference to God. He did so, and fell. The consequence is, that everything since has been viewed by man through a false medium, so that the whole system of things may be now said to be one great complicated falsehood, and man believes it and is lost. The Gospel, therefore, now comes into the world as the truth of God—a world in which it is the *only* system of spiritual truth to be found—in which it stands up alone, like Elijah on Carmel, the only witness for God in a great temple of falsehood; and the great question *now* is, whether man will believe God in preference to Satan. When Satan came, he found man believing God; and he saw that unless he could

induce us to transfer our faith to him, for us there would be, in effect, no falsehood to deceive, no tempter to destroy, no interruption to our paradise,—that everything depended on our believing him. But now, when the Gospel comes, it finds man a firm believer in the god of this world; and it sees that unless we can be induced to transfer our faith back to God, for us, in effect, there will be no Gospel, no truth to sanctify and save, no interruption to our misery and guilt,—that everything depends on our believing *it*. To complain, then, of the hardship of requiring faith in order to salvation is to betray the greatest ignorance or enmity, or both. Indeed, the man who utters it is at the very moment a believer, a firm believer in Satan; and this it is which accounts for the complaint. Satan hath said to him, "Hath God said, In the day thou believest the Gospel thou shalt be saved? It is an unnecessary requirement; He could and ought to save you without; and you shall be saved without." And the man believes it—believes the father of lies in preference to the God of truth, and vents his complaint accordingly. His feeling, therefore, if uttered in full, would amount to this:—"It is very hard that I cannot have all the benefit of believing the truth while I am living in the belief of lies. When the Almighty knows that I am believing Satan, it is very hard that He should ask me to believe Himself in preference. Surely He might take me to heaven without disturbing my progress towards hell." But no; in opposition to all such delusions, contradictions, and enmity of heart, the language of Christ wisely, graciously, necessarily is, "He that *believeth* shall be saved—the Gospel is the means of salvation *to every one that believeth.*"

3. And this will furnish the right reply to another inquiry, "Why is it that the Gospel has not universally triumphed?" Simply because it has not been universally believed. It did not engage that every one should *believe*, but only that every one that *does* believe shall be saved.

4. The *great* question is, then—*Has it proved the power*

*of God unto salvation to every one that believeth?* Had the primitive Christians been perplexed with doubts of its power to save, how eminently fitted was the conversion of Paul to remove them! After him, of whom could they doubt? He himself regarded the question of the Divine sufficiency of the Gospel as settled by his own conversion—settled for ever. But the evidence of its saving power has gone on increasing with each successive age. Ask a Luther what doctrine it was which shook the Papal throne, and he will tell you that it was that grand test of a standing or falling church—*justification by faith alone.* Ask Jonathan Edwards to what he could trace that revival in his church which has since been followed by so many similar Pentecostal scenes, and he will tell you that it immediately followed his discourses *on justification by faith alone.* Ask the Christian missionary by what mighty power he triumphs, and a Brainerd replies—"It was when I discoursed to the multitude on that sacred passage, 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him,' that the word was attended with a resistless power; many hundreds in that great assembly, consisting of three or four thousand, were so much affected, that there was a very great mourning, like to the mourning of Hadadrimmon. 'How was that?' said one of the affected Greenlanders when, after the rationalising process had long been tried on them in vain, the history of our Lord's sufferings was at length read to them—'How was that? Tell me that once more, for I would fain be saved too.'"

In the history of its progress we recognize almost every display of gracious power of which the mind can conceive. Even in our own day, it has melted the inflexible Indian into penitence and tears, and has enabled the shrinking Hindu to brave the loss of caste and the martyr's pangs.

What other evidence of its power can be necessary? Under its subduing and harmonizing influence, the convert from the frozen zone has been hailed as a brother in Christ by the Christian Indian in his native wilderness; and the once

savage warrior of America has sent letters of peace and love to the fisherman of Greenland. At its sound, the barbarian veteran of a hundred battles and of a hundred years has become a little child; and a host of warriors, each of whom would once have preferred death to a tear, have dissolved into penitence.

What other evidence can be necessary? Instruments which had never been used but for war and murder, it has converted to useful and even sacred purposes; and tribes which had never met but in deadly conflict, it assembles together around the table of the Lord. It has declined no contest through fear of defeat; and wherever it has gone, it has erected monuments of its saving power.

What other evidence can be necessary? Among its converts are men whose depravity would compare with that of a Jeroboam, a Manasseh, or a Saul of Tarsus. Name the most vile and degraded of the species; and pointing to its converts the Gospel can say, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God!" Oh, what must be that darkness which is only comparable to the shadow of death? Then, what must that power be which can pierce a continent of such darkness, and make it light in the Lord? And yet the Gospel does this. Oh, what must be that restless anguish of soul which can impel men to undertake long and wasting pilgrimages, and voluntarily to lacerate their flesh, and inflict agonies of self-torture? Then, what must that gracious power be which can say to this tempest of the soul, "Peace, be still," and there is a great calm? And yet the Gospel does this. What must that sense of guilt be which can burst the sacred bonds of humanity, and offer a brother man in sacrifice; or which can even suppress the still more sacred feelings of the mother, and induce her to immolate her infant child? Then, what must that gracious power be which can pluck out that sting of conscious guilt, and bid her go in peace? And yet the Gospel does this; for

it proclaims, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin."

What other evidence of its saving power is necessary? To say that it is the *only* power which does save, is saying but little. Every other moral power destroys. In its remedial and saving influence, the Gospel stands alone in the world. Everything is against it; and yet at this very moment it is saving—saving myriads. It is in the family, cheering ten thousand happy homes. It is in the closet, bidding the Christian ask and receive, that his joy may be full. It is with the little child, opening its infant lips in praise; and with the proud man, making him a little child. It is present with the slave, reconciling him to the degradation of colour—inspiring him with charity towards those who have dealt out to him nothing but insult and wrong—breathing over his passions the calm of resignation—and teaching his spirit, spurned from every other resting place, to rest in God and to wait for His salvation. It is bending over the suffering, and binding up their broken hearts. And it is present in the sick-room by the bed of the departing saint, raising his mind superior to bodily suffering, and, while the dew of death is on his brow, keeping that brow calm and serene.

But, oh, its bright and ultimate results are too great for earth—*they* must be sought for in heaven. Do you ask, then, for greater evidence of its saving power still? Then must you stand where John stood, and command a view of the blessed above. But where is the line by which you can fathom the depth of the pit from which it has saved them? what is the scale by which you can take the height of that bliss to which it has raised them? and where the balances in which you can weigh their eternal weight of glory? for it has proved the power of God to the salvation of them all. Blessed, blessed Gospel! guilt, which might destroy a world has by thy instrumentality been cancelled—iron chains of sin been burst asunder—misery, second only to that of the lost in hell, has given place to the peace of God—hearts stored

with pollution made habitations of God—where Satan's seat was, happy communities have been formed—large tracts of the earth turned into the garden of the Lord—and heaven received some of its richest songs and its brightest crowns. And still the Gospel holds on its way. It looks on all the wants and woes of the world as its own; and never will it rest—never will it account its commission fulfilled and its work complete—till it has extinguished all human misery, broken the rod of the grand oppressor, dried up the tears of the world, turned all its complaints into praise, and replenished the universe with light, and joy, and love.

## V.

And is it possible that the word *shame* should ever have been uttered in connexion with such a Gospel? Yes, shame on the world which occasioned its utterance—shame on darkness, for despising the light—shame on misery, for rejecting mercy—shame on a world perishing of the wounds which its own hand has inflicted, and yet rejecting, scorning, and still nailing to the cross the only hand stretched out to heal it. Not shame on the lips that uttered the word! Honoured be the martyr zeal which could say in the presence of a Cross-despising world, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," for we know what *that* meant. It meant more than it means now; at least, more than it means among us. It meant, "I glory in it." It meant, "I am ready to die for it." It meant, "God forbid that I should glory in aught besides." It meant, "The Gospel of Christ is the only thing in the universe of which, *as a means of salvation*, I am *not* ashamed. Of Judaism I am ashamed; for its design is superseded, its very essence is corrupted and perverted. Of Paganism in all its forms I am ashamed; for it has changed the very truth of God into a lie. But, ashamed of the Gospel! Why, compared with its wisdom every other system is foolishness! Compared with its condescension and grace, the very tender mercies of every other system are cruelty and murder!

Compared with its power, all other strength is weakness, for it is the very power of God! Ashamed of the Cross! It was for the Son of God to be ashamed of *that*. But He was not—He endured the cross, despising the shame. Had He only *touched* that cross, He would have hallowed, ennobled, and clothed it with glory. By *dying* on it, He has made it the symbol of the world's salvation. Ashamed of His humiliation! All the seraphim are at this moment adoring Him on account of it; and God also hath given Him a name above every name. Ashamed of the Gospel! It is the very 'power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Why, it has saved even *me*—me, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious—me, the chief of sinners. And what it has done for me it can do for all mankind; what it has done for me it must do for them, or they will perish—*everlastingly perish*. And believing this, can I hesitate to do and endure the utmost that humanity *can*, in order that they may possess it? Ridicule, persecution, martyrdom—none of these things move me! In such a cause I am now ready to be offered."

Brethren, can we sympathize with the apostle in his lofty appreciation of the Gospel, and his devotedness to its diffusion? I ask not, first, are you thankful that you possess it? nor, secondly, do you cordially believe it? nor, thirdly, do you openly and unshrinkingly profess it? nor, fourthly, are you inspired with a scriptural confidence in its ultimate triumph? But, *fifthly*, I ask all in one, by inquiring, *do you sympathize with the apostle in his lofty appreciation of the Gospel, and his devotedness to its diffusion?* True, in the present day, when the facilities for diffusing the Gospel are so great, numbers may take a superficial part in it who have never felt its power to save. But is it possible that any one who *has* felt that power can ever after be indifferent—can be less than deeply anxious for its diffusion? Oh, brethren, if Paul is to be our example, we have yet much to copy. If he was not a fanatic, we are yet deeply guilty. If he was not

mad, then are we still slumbering—slumbering in the midst of a world whose damnation slumbereth not.

1. And yet, in all this self-consuming zeal, was he exceeding his obligations, doing anything more than carrying out Christian principles to their legitimate application—living to Christ? Did he ever utter a word which implied that he considered himself an exception to what others should be? that no one was bound to be so zealous for Christ as he was? that a lower standard of benevolence was sufficient for them? On the contrary, how humbly did he account himself less than the least of all saints—how uniformly did he speak of himself only as one of a number constrained and borne onwards by the love of Christ—and how earnestly did he say to all, "Follow me, as far as I follow Christ."

2. Numbers did thus follow him; they were ready to be messengers or martyrs, honoured or accursed, anything or nothing, so that they might assist in diffusing the Gospel of Christ. And what was there in all this which is not obligatory on the Christians of the present day? What had the Saviour done for *them* which he has not equalled, and even exceeded, for us? *Compassion moved them;* but is irreligion less depraving, or sin less destructive, or hell less fearful now than then? *Zeal for the glory of Christ incited them;* but are we less indebted to redeeming love than they? We do not hope for less than eternal life, and did they expect more? *The Spirit of God impelled and directed them;* but it was in answer to earnest, united, and persevering prayer; and is the throne of grace less accessible to us than it was to them?

3. Nor can it be alleged that the Gospel since his day has lost any of its divinity or power to save. Of what else in the whole circle of human pursuit can it be truly affirmed that it is worthy of an immortal mind, and that it may be carried without dread into the regions of eternity, and into the presence of God? Bring all the past into its presence—all the objects and interests which crowded and engrossed the world when Paul was on earth—its honours, its riches,

its pleasures, its false religions. I am ashamed of them all; they destroyed the world. With the exception of those to whom the Gospel proved the power of God unto salvation, these things were the means of leading down all the myriads of that generation to perdition. Bring all the *existing* objects and interests of the world into its presence. The *wealth* for which men are mad; true, it is a mountain of riches—but what will its history be? Will it still be devoted to the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, as it ever has been? Then am I ashamed of it all. The *political place and power* for which men are ever struggling—will it involve the same heartlessness, injustice, treachery, and misery which it has ever done? Then am I heartily ashamed of it all. The *crowns and diadems of the earth*—will their wearers resemble the great majority of their predecessors—will they be as responsible, and yet as weak, as worthless, and as wicked? Then am I ashamed of them all, and bless God that I belong not to their number. The *science of the learned* —however I might value the science itself—yet of the idolatrous importance attached to it, of the great results expected from it, of the manner in which it is so generally allowed to occupy the place of true religion, I am utterly ashamed. *The prevailing religions of the earth*—Popery, Mohammedanism, Brahminism, Paganism in all its forms—can I think what a world turns round its cities and populations to the eye of God, what shouts of defiance against Him arise from it, what spectacles of shame are exhibited on it, and can I remember that these are my fellow-men, and that God is looking down upon all this, without being ashamed of them? And, then, looking on to the future, can I remember the *fire* in which all that wealth and those crowns are to be dissolved, and the *judgment-seat* at which all these besotted and guilty beings are to stand, and the tremendous *fate* which awaits them beyond, without looking around for help? And can I know that the Gospel is precisely the help I need, and that it is the only *truth* in a world of falsehood and error, the only

*thing from God* in a world filled with demons and destruction—and can I know that I have been saved by it expressly that I may impart it to others, without throwing my whole soul into the work?

4. Nor can we plead that the Gospel is diffusing itself with sufficient rapidity already. That our missionary success has equalled our missionary efforts, we allow; but that those efforts are at all commensurate with the wants of the world, we deny. Oh, it is fearful to think that since the time when Paul pronounced the Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation, forty thousand millions of human beings should have been allowed to pass through this world of guilt and woe, on their way to a dark and dreadful eternity, without having heard from the Church a single accent of mercy and salvation. And still more startling is it to reflect that there should be a greater number of heathen in the world at this moment than at any previous period since the Gospel dispensation commenced—greater even than about fifty years ago, when the modern missionary effort began; for while, owing to our languid measures, we are proselyting them only at the rate of some hundreds or thousands annually, they are yearly adding to their ranks, by mere increase of population, about *three millions and a half*. This is a reflection at which a Paul would have been thrown into an agony of concern. Brethren, we have long enough tried what half measures, what a lazy, selfish Christianity can do. Is it not high time for us to try the experiment of apostolic zeal?

5. Nor can we plead a want of facility for the missionary enterprise—a want of access to the heathen. How vastly superior are our advantages in this respect to those of a Paul! He anticipated nothing but contempt and persecution if he took the Gospel to Rome. Britain is at this moment the centre around which revolve the hopes and the destinies of man. A large proportion of the heathen are not only held in political subjection to us, but are actually ready to

place themselves as disciples at our feet. Hundreds of thousands of them may be said to be standing at this moment on the threshold of the temple of idolatry, ready to quit it for ever. Shall we call them into the Church of Christ; or shall we remand them back to rekindle the fires of their Moloch, and to rebuild the altars of their demon worship? Multitudes of them are standing at the gates of the Christian Church—the hand of Providence has directed them there—they bring with them signs from heaven that He has sent them, and that He expects us to receive and instruct them. Are we ready to make the sacrifices which the occasion requires? At all events, if we will persist in neglecting them, let us plainly avow the reason. Before we finally dismiss them to destruction, let us by public manifesto, or otherwise, exculpate Christianity, and blame the only guilty cause, by telling them,—"Your conversion to the Christian faith is an object of the highest importance. To effect it would greatly augment our heavenly happiness, secure infinite blessedness to you, and bring to God everlasting glory. As far as our instrumentality is necessary, the means are all in our possession. But we cannot furnish them without abridging our self-indulgence; and as this requires more love for your souls and regard for the authority of Christ than we possess, we see no alternative but that of leaving you to perish." Now, monstrous as such language may seem, by what better plea can we excuse ourselves from entire devotedness to their salvation?

6. Brethren, the Gospel and those who believe it form the only object on earth of which God is not ashamed. *We* talk of glorying in it; but let us remember that there is a Being who not only glories in it, but whose highest glory is *involved* in it—the very power of His glory is embarked in it. Every moment during which we continue to withhold the Gospel from men, we are withholding from God His highest glory—we are concealing from them a scheme of mercy from which He is expecting to derive His richest

revenue of praise for ever. The knowledge of the arts, the discoveries of science, the treasures of philosophy—all these might be kept from them with comparative impunity; but that we should keep back from them knowledge sent from heaven, should cover us with shame, as it does with guilt. To have kept back from them the power of God to create, or to have concealed from them the power of God to punish, that would have been highly dishonouring to God; but that we should keep back from a world perishing, the power of God to save—that we should hide from the dark world, not only his glory, but the very "brightness of his glory"—that we should conceal from a world filled with the most revolting and hideous images of Deity, the "express image of His person"—this is to put a slight on the character and work of Christ which He cannot away with. That we should have seen the Cross of Christ, and yet should have allowed the world to go on, offering its human and other sacrifices, as if He had not "died once for all"—that we should have held His Gospel in our hands, and yet have allowed a thousand impostors and demons to publish their Shasters and Korans instead—that we should "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," grace so amazing that it is perpetually filling all heaven with praise, and yet that we should account it hardly worth reporting—this is to "wound the Father through the Son;" and that we should act thus, knowing as we do how the heart of God is set on the glory of Christ, the height to which He has exalted Him, and the promises of universal dominion and homage He has made to Him—this is not merely to dishonour infinite majesty, but, what is incomparably worse, to inflict a wound on the very heart of infinite love. And,

7. Never till we feel this, and act accordingly—never till the Church puts forth its power in harmony, will *even the evidences of Christianity be complete.* The logical argument for its truth, indeed, is perfect; no chain of reasoning can be more entire. But were its miracles to be all repeated again, and

its prophecies to be multiplied a hundredfold, some signal display of the power and excellency of its motives would still be wanting as the practical result of the whole. That signal proof is simply Christian consistency—the consistency of a devoted Church. In lieu of this, the world will accept nothing, not even the most convincing arguments and cogent appeals; "Give us," they say, "a practical proof that you yourselves believe, and are in earnest." Christ will accept nothing, not even the loudest professions; "If ye love me," saith He, "keep my commandments." We ourselves can accept nothing, not even the growing activity of the present day; our consciences testify against us, and say, "All this activity is far less than you *can* do;" and you are pledged to do all that is *possible* for the recovery of the world. But where is your *self-denial?*—as yet you have given only the crumbs that fall from your table. Where is your *consecration?*—at present you act only from occasional impulse or compunction, or the lowest degree of principle. Where is the *weight of your character?*—not merely is it wanting—well would it be if this were all—but it is *against* you; in exact proportion as it is absent from the cause of Christ, it is present to assist and promote the cause of His foes, to prolong the ruin of immortal souls. Until this evil be remedied, therefore, expect to be kept low, humbled, and disgraced before the world; to be strangers to everything like Pentecostal visitations from on high; to be fearful, uncertain, and unhappy in yourselves. But only remedy the evil, only be consistent, and then "arise, and shine; for thy light will have come, and the glory of the Lord will have arisen upon thee." What could stand before the Gospel of Christ, were all the spirituality of its doctrines, the holiness of its precepts, and the earnest and compassionate benevolence of its aims embodied and made visible in the living character of its disciples? Who could doubt the reality of its miracles, when the Church was seen standing upon them, so to speak, as on the mount of God, herself the crowning

miracle—the great moral miracle of a vast community, living, not unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again? Who could question the truth of prophecy, when the fulfilment of a thousand prophecies was realized in that sublime spectacle itself; when the Church herself became a standing prophecy, her every act a presage of success, her every conflict a prediction of victory, her consecrated character, as the representative of her Lord's character, prophesying to the world in mute but mighty eloquence that to Him every knee must bow? Who could doubt the reality, the superiority, the divinity of the Gospel, when it had thus transferred the whole might of its own character to the character of the Church? *We ourselves* could not doubt it, though now, as the necessary result of our superficial acquaintance with that power, we often do; but then, in the largeness of *its* views, we should acquire such an expansion of soul, and in the execution of its lofty purposes such a sympathy with true greatness, as would make the weak like David, and David like an angel of the Lord. *The world* around us could not doubt it. As in primitive times, "fear would come upon every soul," God would give us "favour with all the people," and would "add to the Church daily such as should be saved." Nor could the heathen themselves doubt it; *their* great argument against Christianity would be gone; the main objection with which our comparative apathy at present arms them would, by the very change of our conduct, be converted into an irresistible plea in its behalf. They could not doubt *our identity with Christ.* Every word we uttered in our Christian capacity would remind them of His compassionate voice; and every action we performed would remind them of His gracious example. Our character would be an expansion of the character of Christ.

They could not doubt of *the power of Christian principle,* for they would see that it secured the self-denying energy of the whole man—the whole Church. They could not doubt

our *belief of their danger* or *the depth of our concern for their deliverance*, for they would see it in the unremitting earnestness of our efforts to save them. Nor could they doubt any longer *the power of the Gospel to transform the world*, for every day would bring them the report of fresh accessions made to the kingdom of Christ. Only let the Church be itself—only let it become the devoted agency which it was meant to be—and the world should soon be given into its hands. Who could see it move in its missionary path without being ready to precede it as its eager herald, shouting, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," for Christ himself would be with it? Who could look down on the idolatrous regions which lay in its route without summoning them to surrender in the name of the Lord, and feeling the certainty of their speedy subjection to Christ? Who could look into the roll of prophecy without the full conviction that all those predictions which paint the universality and glory of Messiah's reign had reached the eve of their fulfilment? *The honour and triumph of the Gospel would be completed.*

Christians, where else are interests like these at stake? Where else, amidst all the enterprises of time, does so ample a field stretch before the view, or such momentous issues await the result? To *overrate* such an object is impossible; to *stand aloof from it*, or *even to regard it coldly*, enormous guilt. What, then, is the amount of practical interest which you are taking in it? What are you doing that others may feel its power—your children, your servants, friends, neighbours—the world at large? Ask yourself:—Is it at all commensurate with its mighty claims?

Let others boast of great designs, and talk of final causes; here is the final cause itself—an end so great that all other ends stand to it only in the relations of means—so lofty that there is nothing higher—so glorious that everything else is honoured by serving it. The one point, the sole end to which everything in the government of God is tending, is "to the praise of the glory of His grace;" and to this point

it *is* tending with the directness and force of a universal law. Every mite given—every Bible distributed—every missionary sent forth—every church planted—falls in with that stream of events, and forms a part of that vast combination of means by which God is reducing and restoring all things unto Himself. Even now the agencies of Providence are urged into unusual activity; all things are rushing to that final issue. Delay to join in the march of mercy, and you will lose opportunities of honouring God and of serving your race such as never occurred to the Church before, and can never be enjoyed *by you* again. Be indolent, covetous, self-indulgent now, and the very stones will cry out. Continue to live for yourself, and the universe will upbraid you—the perishing will point at and reproach you as accessory to their destruction—the Judge himself will say, "I never knew you." On the contrary, be faithful now, and the very trees of the field will clap their hands; "live unto the Lord," and all things shall live for you, and be ready to serve you in His cause; be entirely devoted to His claims, and others shall be moved by your example, and the world blessed by your influence, and Christ himself shall rejoice over you. Less than entire consecration has been tried for ages, and the fatal result is to be seen in the thousands perpetually passing—passing at this moment—to the bar of God from regions where the sound of salvation has never been heard. If you sympathize with Christ, then, in the travail of His soul, you will, from this time, see what *entire devotedness* can do for their recovery. Moved by His example, you will look through your tears on a world perishing in its guilt, and you will feel that you are never imitating Him so much as by self-denying painstaking endeavours for its salvation. Subdued by the tenderness of its claims, you will freely acknowledge that you are not your own; that the same reasons which bind you to do anything for Christ, bind you to do everything in your power, and to do it in the best possible manner; that you are bought with a price so great, that it might purchase the entire dedication

of a whole universe of intelligent beings to all eternity. Affected and engrossed by the magnitude of His cause—the cause of the world's recovery—you will feel, that to throw less than *all* your energies into its promotion is an insult to all the momentous interests which it involves. Not only, therefore, will you task your own powers in its behalf, you will task them partly in an endeavour to move heaven and earth to join you. In a word, constrained by His love, you will "thus judge"—and never can you be said to be moved by His love except as you are thus judging, and laboriously acting on the judgment—"that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." Hasten into His presence, fall down at His feet, and surrender yourself and everything you have to His service. He will graciously accept the dedication; and, ten thousand ages hence, you will be still praising Him that you did so, and an unknown number will join in blessing Him on your account. And, brethren, to this it must come. "When Zion travailed, she brought forth;" and not till then. The time is hastening on, when the only question with the Church will be—when the only consideration must be—Is it within the compass of our power to bring all around us under the influence of the Gospel—to send the Gospel through the world? Not, whether we can send it with a small effort—with little self-denial—in a way which shall not materially interfere with our favourite plans of ease and personal gratification; but can we, by great and long-continued efforts—by strong crying and tears—by the exercise of a bold and vigorous faith—by the most strenuous exertions, and the most agonizing struggles, furnish a dying world—the Saviour's world—with that Gospel which might prove the power of God to their salvation? The question must be answered by the actual experiment of unreserved devotedness to the attempt.

But, finally, let me earnestly ask you, my hearers, has the

Gospel proved the power of God to your own salvation? Its passing *impulses* you may have felt, but do you know it as an abiding *power?* Its sublime imagery may have often regaled your imagination, and its touching appeals have moved your passions, and its solemn claims have wrung from you a passing vow; but, oh, do you know it as an indwelling principle—a transforming power? A spiritual power of some kind you *are* always living under, whether you will or not. Your path through life lies through a scene in which every object and event is constantly shedding on you an influence for evil or for good. But here is an instrument by which you can be *saved;* and the only instrument by whose influence you *can* be saved. Other things may inform your mind, but this transforms the heart. Other things may beguile and amuse, but this saves the soul. Other things may suffice for *this* life, but you are on your way to another life. And, oh, how fearful the prospect of entering the eternal state without having felt the only power which can there avail you. Marks and signs of having yielded to other influences you will carry with you; but that you should have resisted the only power that could save—that you should have spent your life in a world where the cross of Christ was set up, without ever falling prostrate at its foot—that you should have had daily to pass by the cross, should have lived for years in the midst of the gracious influences which stream from it, and yet that you should have come out from among them all unmelted and unrenewed—this will be for an endless lamentation. Many around you, too, *are* examples of its saving power. The Gospel has come to *them* "not in word only, but in power." Its statements of human depravity and exigence they have believed as true of themselves. Its offers of salvation they have gratefully accepted for themselves. They do not merely coldly assent to the Gospel—or not deny it merely; they "believe to the saving of their souls." And why will not you thus believe? Your soul's endless well-being is at stake; why will you peril its precious

interests any longer? "Why"—and, oh, remember that it is infinite tenderness which asks you the question—"Why will ye die?" This day breathe forth the earnest supplication—"O let the Gospel prove the power of God to my salvation."

Spirit of God! signalize this occasion with Thy converting grace; fill this new sanctuary with Thy glory; inspire with renewed energy thine honoured servant who is to minister in it; here let Thy Gospel prove the power of God to the salvation of numbers, that Thy Church may be enlarged, and Thy kindom come. Amen.

# SERMON II.

## THE HIGH AND LOFTY ONE DWELLING WITH THE CONTRITE MAN.

ISAIAH lvii. 15—"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

ISAIAH lxvi. 1, 2—"Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

THESE two passages are evidently congenial in sentiment, and are both directed against that one prevailing error which leads men to substitute the sensible for the spiritual—the creature for the Creator. But though they are both levelled against the same error, the forms of that error are different. From the context of the first we learn that it refers to a period of restoration from national calamity—that with a view to that restoration the Israelites generally had resorted to foreign aid, and even to idolatrous means, at the same time foolishly expecting that God would add His co-operation to the whole, as if Omnipotence would be seen confederating with such allies—"God and Isis" inscribed on the same banner, "Jehovah and Baal" joined in the same war-cry—or as if the idolatrous state of mind which could lead them to seek such help, and the proud elation they felt at having

obtained it, was just the appropriate feeling for them to bring into His presence—a feeling which seemed to say to Him, "We have done what we could to render ourselves at this crisis independent of Thee; so that whether Thou art with us or not, we calculate on success. But still, to save appearances, and remembering that Thou art our national Deity, we ask Thy co-operation, and would rather have Thee with us than against us." "No," saith God, "when thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away—vanity shall take them. Not that I propose to work without means; but I, the supreme, the eternal, the Holy One, who am independent of all means, if I do employ them, must be allowed to select such as are appropriate to my own character. These are the humble among men, the contrite, and all 'who put their trust in me,' and these 'shall inherit my holy mountain.'"

The second passage refers to a period subsequent to the first—a period when the prediction in the first should be accomplished, when the nation should be restored, the worship of God re-established, and when those who had been spoken of as humble, contrite, and believing, should be occupied in rebuilding and beautifying the temple on Zion. But here we find the very men who had escaped the tacit rebuke of the first passage laying themselves open to the implied rebuke of the second, by trusting unduly to the attractions of their temple. They had avoided the error in its *grosser* form, for they expected deliverance from none but God; but into the *subtler* form of that error they completely fell, for they expected to secure the Divine presence among them by the complication and splendour of their ritual. Thus, if the former party acted as if they aimed to expel God from among them, the latter acted as if they hoped to build Him in, and engross Him to themselves—the error of both proceeding from a preference of the sensible to the spiritual, and from a mistaken apprehension of the character of God, as if He were altogether such an one as themselves. Accordingly, in each

case the Almighty recalls their attention to that infinite perfection of His nature, by which He is distinguished from every other being in the universe—evidently intending that the sublime recollection should shame them out of their delusions, by reminding them that everything is to be viewed in relation to Him; since the highest distinction of the loftiest creature is, that it can find a place in His train, can harmonize with His plans, can reflect His image, and share His approbation.

In accordance with this view, and in the humble hope that we may derive from it the same practical impression, we propose to illustrate the following propositions,—that, from eternity, the residence of God has always corresponded with His nature and perfections; that if He condescend, therefore, to commune with any of the children of men, it can only be, in harmony with the same principle, with the humble and the contrite; that all worship, therefore, is acceptable to Him only in proportion as it harmonizes with the excellencies of His nature; and that all human *instrumentality* depends for its efficiency on the same condition.

## I.

In the first place, we remark that, from eternity, the residence of God has always corresponded with His infinite nature and perfections. This seems to be implied in the text in three particulars: being eternal, He has inhabited eternity; as the High and Lofty One, He has occupied the throne of supremacy; and His name being Holy, He has dwelt in the high and holy place.

1. He calls our attention, first, to His eternity; for this necessarily preceded the external manifestation both of His supremacy and holiness, and can itself never be manifested. Far back in thought, and beyond the limits of time, as we may be able occasionally and for a single moment to go, we are ever accompanied by the humbling conviction that we have made no approach whatever to the understanding of His

eternity. The discoveries of science lead back our imagination to a period incalculably remote; but even if each of the countless stars had been formed in succession, and if the time which elapsed between the formation of each had equalled that entire period, the mind which could span the whole, which could dart back a thought to the moment in which the first star beamed on the regions of space, would feel that he had only reached the starting point for the preceding eternity. For if then he should ask, "Where dwelt the Deity before that?" the answer of the oracle is, "He inhabited eternity;" so that that star, of which he had caught a glimpse, could only be regarded as the first lamp that was lighted up to guide the way back to His dread abode.

Can we transport ourselves back, in thought, beyond that verge of creation? How shall we prepare for the solemnity of the occasion? Let us imagine ourselves to have been left alone, at midnight, within the veil of the ancient Jewish temple; and with the awe inspired by the idea of being there alone, and in darkness, with the present God, let us transport ourselves back beyond the limits of the created, till we find ourselves alone in the unseen presence of the Eternal Uncreate. And, oh! with what additional dreadfulness is the majesty of this darkness invested when we remember that it is the majesty of solitude. He has inhabited this eternity alone. Here the great and only truth which He may be regarded as silently repeating through all the solitudes of space, and through every point of duration, is the sublime affirmation, "*I am*, underived, self-existent, absolute Being; in which sense there never has been, never will, never can be, any being besides. All other being can only have leave to be." Here, through all the interminable past, wherever he looked, He was—for He himself was immensity. And is it possible, we may imagine ourselves to ask—is it possible that this space will ever be occupied by aught besides? Sun, the spot where thou wilt stand, and Earth, the space where thou wilt roll, is holy ground. It is, and for an eternity it has been, occu-

pied by Him who will be your Maker. Here, were He to break the universal silence, He might demand, "Is there a God besides me? yea, there is none; I know not any." I, that know all the possibilities of being — I, who at this moment am everywhere present throughout illimitable space, find such a being nowhere—I, who have thus inhabited immensity from eternity, have never, in any point of past duration, beheld the least manifestation of such a being—I, that am unlimited Being, exclude, by that very perfection and necessity of my nature, the possibility of another unlimited being.

But He need not thus speak to vindicate His claims, for there is none to dispute them. In imagination, we are standing as yet in the solitudes of the past eternity. The first creative fiat has not yet gone forth. Never has this stillness been broken. No ray of created light has ever beamed across this darkness. This infinite space has never owned a world. No seraph bows before His throne. Whatever is, is God—infinite self-sufficience. Boundless as His capacity for happiness must always have been, the consciousness of His own excellence, and the contemplation of His own perfections, have ever been sufficient to fill it. Unlimited and unceasing as His activity has ever been, His own nature has been sufficient to employ and contain the whole. Dateless in His duration, the postponement of creation for ten million ages would not have increased that duration, nor would it have been diminished had the fiat gone forth ten million ages ago. Unshared as His eternity, and lonely as His immensity may appear to have been, His self-communion has been sufficient to occupy and replenish the whole with infinite happiness. Whatever is, is God. Without Him, even eternity would not have been, for He Himself is eternity. He is the only and the all of being.

2. But let us recross the boundary of time—let us suppose the first creative fiat to have gone forth—the solitudes of immensity to have been peopled with exalted orders of intelligent beings, and its silence broken with the echoes of

their praise. Need we ask the rank which *He* sustains in relation to them? The infinite superiority of His own nature determines that—determines that it is the relation of supremacy to subordination—of all-sufficiency to dependence. Hence the sentiment of the text; for where should the high and lofty One dwell, but in the high and holy place? However vast and various their excellencies may be, they can never forget that the whole is *derived*, that it existed in Him before it was imparted to them, that it is *limited*, so that after it has gone on augmenting for countless ages, they will still have to remember that it is infinitely short of His excellence. However much they may be able to comprehend of what He is, from what He has done since He began to create, they will ever have to remember that all the eternity of His past glory remains unexplored; and that, as they cannot fathom the abyss of His *present* perfections, the mystery of His nature is hourly augmenting in their hands; that time is adding its mystery to the mystery of the past eternity, and that the mystery of both is to be carried forwards to the still greater account of the eternity to come. They will feel—His most intelligent creatures will feel—that after they shall have continued to advance through interminable ages from throne to throne, and from one height of glory to a higher still, the loftiest summit will only give them a more enlarged and commanding prospect of His boundless perfection.

Oh, could we ascend and obtain a view of those thrones towering above thrones, and, having scaled an unknown height, could we then see others loftier still, stretching away beyond our furthest sight, what should we behold but a few of the lowest of the steps which lead up to His throne? He speaks, and the most exalted of the principalities look up to Him and feel that there is but One High and Lofty; that, compared with Him, all created height is His footstool, all other dignity is seated in the dust. He looks on them, and they feel that "He humbleth himself to behold the things

that are in heaven." Lofty as their natures and countless as their myriads may be, there is a sense in which He must ever continue to dwell as perfectly alone through the eternity to come, as He did in the sublime and appalling solitude of the eternity past. He still inhabiteth eternity. It is the only habitation which suits His infinite greatness. He can never come forth from it, so as to bring Himself within created limits. On account of His incomparable greatness, never will He be able to bring Himself within the comprehension of His loftiest creatures. Retired within the depths of His own immensity, they will never be able to approach and behold Him *directly*. For all they know of Him, they will ever feel that they are indebted to a medium of His own devising, and that, without that medium, the whole created universe, including themselves, would only have constituted a living altar with this inscription, "To the unknown God."

3. But besides His existence as Eternal and His rank as Supreme, he proclaims His character as Holy—as the Being whose very *name* is Holy, and *His* name is His nature. What the moral character of Jehovah might prove to be, was a question (if we can suppose there ever was a moment when it yet remained to be disclosed to His intelligent creatures) of the deepest interest, of the last importance. That He inhabited eternity they knew; for had there ever been a period when He was not, He would not now have been; but had He filled the past eternity with *good* or with *evil?* That He was the high and lofty One they saw, and this gave an infinite interest to the question, What will be the character of His government? Will it be a dominion of *law* or of *force?* and if of law, what will be its nature? What will be punished, what rewarded? Tell us, What have we to expect? Eternity is before us—what awaits us in that boundless future? Oh, that we knew the character of God, that we might at least conjecture what He has stored up for us there.

But even supposing, I say, there was ever a moment when this vast disclosure remained to be made to His intelligent

creatures, it could not have been for more than a moment. They had only to look within in order to perceive that they themselves were made for holiness. They had only to listen in order to hear Him saying perpetually, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." They had only to examine His character in order to see that holiness sums up all His attributes; that He loves holiness for itself; that He has nothing to hope, and yet He is holy—nothing to fear, and yet He is holy; that He and holiness are one. They had only to study the constitution of the universe in order to see that all its parts are simply that holiness put into visible forms—all its laws the same holiness drawn out and put into harmonious activity. They had only—oh! fearful experiment—they had only to sin, even in thought, and all the order of nature was thrown into confusion; the universe armed to resist the infraction, and holiness flamed forth in a consuming fire—a fire which ceased to flame in heaven only on the condition that it might kindle and burn on in hell for ever—a fire never to be quenched! Oh, where shall such holiness dwell but in the high and holy place? Where shall it dwell when the heavens are not clean in its sight? Who shall dwell with it when even the angels in its sight are charged with folly? Hath the temple of the universe a holy of holies—not merely a holy place, but a thrice holy—the holiest of all? *That* is the appropriate residence of Him "whose name is holy;" and the only condition on which He will make even that His peculiar residence is, that sin be kept at an infinite distance from it—that there be a hell to receive and imprison it; and the only condition on which even His holiest creatures are allowed to dwell with Him there is (indeed He has made it a law of their nature), that they shall never for a moment remain at a stand in holiness, but be ever advancing to higher and higher degrees. And when they begin to praise His holiness, they feel as if they could never satisfy themselves with the adoring exclamation, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!" And when He calls them nearer to His

throne, they can see but one sight—that He is glorious in holiness. And when He calls them nearer still, a single look overpowers them, and the wing which has taken them there veils their faces as they fall prostrate before Him.

Such is the awful yet glorious Being who speaks in the text. And do we not see that His object in speaking is to impress us with the great truth we are so prone to forget, that from eternity His residence has always corresponded with His nature and perfections; nay, more, *has been made by them?* His residence and His relations have received *their* character entirely from *His* character. Even man, one of His creatures, can say, "The mind is its own place;" imparts its own character to it—sheds its own hue over surrounding objects—is its own heaven or its own hell. And shall the prerogative of the Infinite Mind be inferior? "No," saith He, "without Me there would have been no eternity, for there would have been none to inhabit it; without Me there would have been no Supreme, for there would have been no subordinate; without Me there would have been nothing *high*, nothing *holy*, for there would have been no standard either of height or of excellence. Without being subjected to the succession of time, it is I alone who give existence to duration; without being confined to place, it is I who give locality to space, and it is I who impart a character to the place where I choose to be known. By the perfection of My nature I am My own place and the centre of all I have made, so that everything *is* according as it is related to Me."

II.

Then, secondly, if He condescend to hold intercourse with man, it can only be in harmony with the same principle. He has not one principle for one world and another principle for another. He knows nothing of the temporizing and shifting policy of man. The doctrine of expediency has no place in His administration. Ascertain the law which regulates His conduct in any one particular, and you will find that it regu-

lates His conduct in every other particular of the same class. Select any one principle of His conduct, and you will find that, like Himself, it is from everlasting to everlasting, that it is on its way from one eternity to another; and all this owing to that infinite perfection of His nature which neither requires nor admits of a change.

Now, this is the principle on which He comes forth in the text and demands an audience from His people, leaving them to infer from what He states, *three* things:—the folly of supposing that He could be influenced, in His intercourse with them, by the low considerations which regulate their intercourse with each other; the reasonableness of His selecting the humble and the contrite as the objects of His regard; and the depth of His condescension and grace in regarding even these.

1. Why is it, think you, that He comes forth and gives us this description of Himself? Why, but to shew us that, if He condescends to hold any intercourse with us, the terms of that intercourse must be prescribed entirely by Himself. You judge (as if He had said) of what a fellow-creature may expect from you by his *titles;* hear my titles,—"Jehovah, the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." What distinction can *you* add to them? You estimate a mortal's rank by the remoteness of his ancestry—I am the First, the unoriginated Being. "Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Cast a look if thou canst at the abyss of eternity—*that* was Mine abode. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever I had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, I am God." You judge of a mortal's rank by the mansion he inhabits, and, on occasion, you prepare for his reception accordingly. There is a place which, since time began, I choose to designate as the place of My abode. I dwell in the high and holy place. But could *you* hope to scale its heights when the distance of the

nearest star defies your utmost powers of imagination? Could you hope to survive the sight of its splendours, when even the sun, a created spark, dazzles and confounds your gaze? You can be awed by the presence of even human worth; what, then, should you feel in the presence of Him whose *name* is holy—who, if He looks on iniquity, can only look on it to scorch and wither it up? "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hands made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord." You think of erecting a temple which shall attract the Majesty of heaven by its splendours, as if you should invite a monarch to descend from his throne by gilding his footstool. On account of His greatness, you would enlarge its dimensions? But do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. On account of His grandeur, you would multiply its priests and bedizen them with costly robes. Think of His state and retinue above, where His train filleth the temple, where thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him! On account of His supremacy, you would multiply His sacrifices. "Will I eat the flesh of bulls?" saith God, "or drink the blood of goats?" Multiply them as you will, set all Lebanon in a blaze, and offer up all its herds as a burnt-offering, still He can say, "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." Offer up the whole material world, and He could say, "The world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof." Mine before you or your race came into existence; Mine by the highest right—the right of creation.—Oh, the folly of supposing that the favour of Infinite Excellence could be propitiated by material gifts, or the presence of the Omnipresent God could be limited to any circle that we could draw!

But because man may have convicted himself of folly in these respects, is he, therefore, to retire mortified and in despair of ever securing the Divine presence? Let us hear what

God the Lord will yet say to us? He has informed us of His eternal abode, of His supremacy, and of His excellence, and yet He is speaking. "Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place;" and as He says this, His eye is running to and fro in the earth, wandering over halls, and palaces, and gilded domes, till, settling complacently on an object in the dust, he adds, "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." What! and is it a small thing with God to tell us this—that He should couple these two expressions together—that He dwells with the high and the holy, and with the low and the broken-hearted? What! is the transition from that height to that depth nothing to Him, that He speaks of it in one sentence—in the same breath? "With him also"—as if it made little or no difference to His greatness whether He dwelt there or here. Whereas we have been endeavouring to shew that all the magnificence of earth is as nothing on account of the superior magnificence of heaven; but we find that in a sense we have erred, for even the magnificence of heaven itself is as nothing in His sight. Irrespective of all such considerations, He tells us that He dwells there or here alike. While we are losing ourselves in wonder at His condescension in communing with a prostrate child of the dust, He would have us to carry our wonder further back than that, to the amazing fact that He should commune with *any* of His creatures. He would have us to know that the wonder is that He should be found in intercourse with the spirits of heaven; but having stooped to that, it requires but a very slight degree of condescension more to stoop to man; that however lofty they may appear to us, and however near to His throne they may seem to be as viewed from earth, as viewed from the height of His throne, man is but "a little lower than the angels"—*both* are nearly on a level. "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and that are in earth!"

2. Now having thus humbled Himself, we see the reasonableness of His selecting the humble and the contrite as the objects of His Divine regard. It is only such that are prepared to receive Him. Every other description of character is prepared to resist His coming, or to give Him only a feigned welcome. *As the infinite and eternal Spirit,* He comes to commune with our spirit; but in the case of every class except the humble, He finds the ground already occupied, and He has to stand at the door and knock. *As the High and the Lofty One,* He comes to have His supremacy recognized, to receive us at His footstool; but all except the humble are seated on little thrones of their own, and will not come down to receive Him. *As the Being whose name is Holy,* He comes to imprint on us the likeness of His own image; but none save the humble and those melted in contrition are in a state to receive the sacred impress. *He comes to be honoured, appreciated, adored;* but all save the humble are busied in asserting their own little claims—are, in effect, prepared to quarrel with His supremacy, and to pluck at His sceptre. Can we wonder, then, that if He comes to commune with us, His abode should be with the humble? Where should goodness dwell but with gratitude? Where should the fulness of the Creator pour itself forth but into the emptiness of the creature?

3. But will He commune even with the contrite? For here the question arises, the wonder presents itself, that He should condescend even to *this.* And what part of His conduct towards us is not marked with condescension? And what part of His condescension is not a wonder, an abyss of wonder? Ascend to the first act—that he should in any sense have come forth from the depths of His eternity, that He should have deigned to be a Creator, that He should have put off from Him the glory in which He had been eternally enshrined, laying aside an eternal weight of it, in order to create, that He should descend to be omnipotent for such a purpose, and then that, having made creatures, He should vouchsafe to be called supreme in relation to such creatures

to beings the highest of whom is, by necessity of nature, infinitely below Him—to stoop to such grandeur is itself condescension; and then that He should submit to be worshipped —worshipped by beings who will never be able to comprehend Him, never be able to think of more than one *part* of His character, or of one *illustration* of His character, at a time, so that at the moment when they are most lost in admiration by thinking of that one, all the other myriad illustrations of His character will be unthought of, and after they shall have been enlarging their conceptions of His glory for myriads of years, that they should still have to remember that what they know of Him is as nothing compared with what remains to be known of Him!

But this is only the first stage in the history of His condescension. All this applies, and might be confined to, the unsinning angels. All this, the anxious penitent may say—all this I can believe. But what if, after His condescending to make a creature, that creature should labour to unmake himself, or to make himself something essentially different from what he was? What if, after His condescending to allow Himself to be worshipped, that creature should refuse to worship Him—should worship other objects even in His very presence, worship *himself* rather—should labour to forget *Him*, and failing in that, should fill with enmity against Him —what could then be expected, what could condescension itself do in such a case?

What *might have been* expected we know; and it is that which makes what He has done so amazing. That He should have stooped to ask for a hearing, in a world filled with the noisy praises of itself and its idols; that amidst that din, He, the High and the Lofty One, should have deigned to republish the forgotten fact of His own existence, and to recapitulate his titles; that He whose heaven is one vast temple, sacred throughout to His worship, should command the erection of a house on earth, where He knew that idolatry would come up to its very doors, and even obtrude into His

presence; and that then, when the crisis required, when justice demanded the sinner himself or a substitute, that that substitute should have been found in the person of Him who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God—that the Invisible himself should have assumed a material form, taking up the very dust we trod on into His mysterious person—that the Supreme should have become subordinate, subjecting Himself to His own laws, voluntarily placing Himself at the bar of justice in our stead, laying bare His own bosom, and inviting the stroke which should have fallen upon us, bowing His head and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,—this is a scale of condescension in which we behold Him stooping lower and lower still, till He has reached a point where even inspiration itself stands lost in wonder, and can only find relief in adoring exclamations, exclamations which are among the most welcome parts of the Word of God—"Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? Herein is love! Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"

Here, then, the question is answered; the amazing fact, that the High and Lofty One will come and commune with the contrite sinner, is demonstrated. An arch is thrown across the mighty gulf of separation, or rather the gulf itself is filled up, and thus the very means of communication between God and man become both the proof and the pledge that it can and *shall* be maintained. And here, too, as before, we see that the residence of God not only corresponds with His glorious character, *but that it is literally made by it.* For what is it but the sight of that Majesty which produces this humility, prostrating itself and exclaiming, "Now mine eye seeth thee, behold, I am vile!" What is it but the sight of that spotless purity which produces the anguish that smites on its breast and exclaims, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And oh, that cross—when every other means has failed, how often at the sight of that has obduracy itself dissolved into penitence, and pride put on the sackcloth of humility, and the

new creature, taking a survey of all created good, collecting it all together, and then relinquishing the whole, trampling it all in the dust, has exclaimed, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"

## III.

Now, from this it follows, thirdly, that no religious worship can be acceptable to God, except as it harmonizes with the character of God. Indeed, if this harmony were *not* necessary—if the individual or the Church could obtain access to God without such harmony with His character, it *would* not, *could* not conduce to *their* real advantage. *That* in which the happiness of our spiritual nature consists must be something congenial to that nature, and something which is capable of imparting itself to that nature. Sensual pleasures cannot do this, they can only touch the grosser elements of our susceptibility, they cannot pass in and penetrate to our interior being, are not subtle enough to blend with our spiritual essence. All the opulence and resources of earth in this respect are indigence itself, leaving us to pine and languish in the midst of plenty. But God, as he is a Spirit, is both congenial with the nature of His spiritual offspring, and is capable of imparting Himself to them, opening to them fresh views of His excellence, awakening in them fresh sensations of delight, breathing into them His own Spirit, making them partakers of the Divine nature.

But, as we have already intimated—and as, indeed, the text implies—the first question to be considered, when God and man are to be brought together, is, not what is suitable for man, but what is becoming for God. If each party requires certain conditions, surely the requirements of the superior nature should be considered before those of the inferior — especially too when that superiority is infinite. Now, if all the diversified forms which religion has ever assumed were to be divided into two classes, it would be

found that this consideration involves the great principle of their distinction. All the rites, forms, and ceremonies by which the worship of God has been overlaid—all the idolatry of Paganism, and all the corruption of the true religion—all the Phariseeism of the former economy, and all the Popery of the present—have arisen from considering what *man* would be pleased with, rather than what would be pleasing to *God*.

Not, indeed, that God, in the worship which he has prescribed, has left our nature unconsidered, or the necessities of that nature unconsulted. The incarnation of the Son of God himself was intended, partly, to meet that great want of our compound nature—the want of a palpable definite object on which our imagination could settle, and on which our affections could rest awhile in their upward ascent to God. But then the great difference between God's method of consulting our wants, in this respect, and man's, is that, while man's method detains the mind and prevents it from rising to God, the means which God employs are intended and calculated to lead us on to Him as the end. And the reason of this is that, even in consulting what *we* require, He has first considered what He himself required. In consulting on the great question of our restoration, He had first to consider how He could consistently allow it. Man had changed, but Immutability could not alter on that account. Man had transgressed—was the great Lawgiver therefore to repeal His laws, descend from His throne, and abandon His government? Man had fallen out of his place, had wandered from his orbit—was the Great Centre of Being therefore to leave *His* position, and to follow him in his eccentric course? The first thing to be considered was, what was suitable for *God* to do? And do you not see that to this it is that Christianity is indebted for all its peculiarity and glory? that, if it has an atonement, it is because the *justice* of God required it? that, if it has a Mediator between God and man, it is first and chiefly because the *holiness* of God requires it? that, if it

provides the agency of the Spirit, it is principally because Divine immutability and perfection require that the sinner should be conformed to God, and not God to the sinner! And do you not see, do you not with an apostle admire, how He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, in making one and the same arrangement to answer both the requirements of His own nature and the necessities of ours? Well for us was it, that He first considered what He Himself required; since, in providing for that, He has more effectually provided for our necessities than as if he had made them the primary subject of consideration. Well for us is it, that He determined first that He would be a *just* God, for that has made Him the most glorious Saviour; that He required an atonement in order to our justification, for that has at the same time provided the most glorious means for our sanctification, and all those cords of love by which He can draw us back again to Himself.

1. Hence it is, I repeat, that the state of each individual mind, and the collective worship of the Church, can be acceptable to God only as it harmonizes with His character. If supremacy comes here, He expects to behold subordination, and what is that but humility? He asks not that we should think of ourselves below what we really are, that we should attempt anything like self-annihilation, but simply that we should conform our views to our condition, that we should take that estimate of our character and wants which He Himself entertains. This is the humility of heaven, for humility does not necessarily and of itself imply a sense of guilt. Angels are among the most humble of His creatures, for they never lose sight of their entire dependence on Him. And the greatest example of excellence which earth ever saw, though unstained by a single pollution, could say, "I am meek and lowly of heart." But if humility be a virtue among the angels of God, if it was eminently exemplified in the Son of God, how important is it that *we* should be humble. If they who have no sins to deplore, who are

spotless as the throne of God, are yet distinguished by humility, how humble should we be who owe our ruin to our pride, who are dependent, not now on goodness merely, but on mercy and long-suffering, who cannot easily think too meanly of ourselves!

2. Humility is not enough for man. If they who have never sinned are humble, more than humility must be proper for man—there must be contrition also. Now the text implies *this:* it intimates that if the High and Holy One comes amongst us, He expects to be received amidst the sighs of penitence and the tears of godly sorrow. A spirit of self-sufficiency and self-dependence has been our ruin; He expects, therefore, that before He begins to do anything towards our personal recovery, we should be prepared to descend from the pedestal our pride has erected, and should cast ourselves down at His feet. The real value of that humble penitence which He requires, consists in its inducing us to desire and welcome the assistance we need—to abandon ourselves cordially to the Divine direction—to descend, and gratefully to occupy our proper station at His footstool, as pensioners on His grace. There is a sense in which God himself sorrows on account of our sin—and the death of Christ is His expression of that sorrow—the amazing sacrifice of His only-begotten Son was the only adequate expression of that sorrow. If He comes amongst us, therefore, He expects to find us collected around the Cross—looking upon Him whom we have pierced, and mourning—mingling our tears with His—feeling with Him on the great subject of sin—with hearts broken and contrite, and refusing to be healed by any balm but His precious blood, to be bound up by any hand but His, to be made whole by any influence but the distinct and cheering assurance of His forgiving love.

3. But more—if this voice of mercy is to be heard—if He comes amongst us to address us, He expects that we should tremble at His word—that is, that our hearts should

vibrate and respond to every accent He utters—that if He says to us, "Seek ye my face," our hearts should instantly reply, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek." He comes amongst us to reimpress on our hearts the heavenly image of Himself, which sin had effaced; but if the seal is to impress, the wax must be melted; and the design of that penitence which He looks for is, that the heart may be softened, and in a state to take the sacred impress of His every feature. Is He absolutely supreme?—the corresponding impression on our heart must be a most profound self-subjection. Is He infinitely self-sufficient and all-sufficient?—our impression must be that of self-emptiness, disposing us to quit ourselves, and to live in Him. Does He remind us of His holiness?—the emotion answering to that must be godly sorrow at the perception of our unlikeness to Him, and earnest desires for His transforming spirit. Faithfulness in Him must be answered by trust in us. Grace in Him must be answered by gratitude, love, and obedience in us. Every excellence in His character must be answered by a corresponding excellence in ours.

But if the very perfection of His nature makes this correspondence necessary, so also do the wants and the well-being of our nature. Everything in creation trembles and responds to the voice of God but the stony heart of man; and the welfare of everything depends on its power thus to respond. "The Lord," says the Psalmist, "uttereth His voice, the earth trembles and shakes"—inanimate nature involuntarily replies to His every word. And who has not felt the power of even human melody to move the heart? Who has not seen or read of an entire audience moved like the heart of one man, while listening to some soul-subduing strain—now melting to tears—now ready to shout with ecstasy—now lifted to heaven—now prostrate in the dust—as the character of the strain was changed? The voice of God is the music of heaven, the primary and parent sound of the universe; and shall the words of a man that hath a pleasant voice, and

that playeth well on an instrument, exert a power and yield a pleasure greater than that of His gracious voice? The ear of the humble has been opened to catch its softest tones; the heart of the contrite has been subdued by its melting power. All other harmony but reminds him of this. Its slightest tone of wrath would dissolve him with dread—its still small voice of love thrills him with delight. To be able to hear and to appreciate the music of His gracious voice, is to antedate the happiness of heaven. Nay, the heart of the Christian is itself become an instrument of temple-music in the service of God.

What is the created universe but one mighty chorus for His praise? Everything that hath breath is exhorted and expected to praise the Lord. And the effect of evangelical humility is, that it prepares the heart which had hitherto sullenly refused to join, and had uttered only sounds of discord, to take its station, and add its voice to the general song. His first sigh of penitence blends with the harps of heaven. His first prayer for mercy is the tuning of the heart for an endless song. His first burst of gratitude is only a preluding note for eternity. He would place his heart as a harp in the hand of God, to vibrate and tremble at His touch alone. If the language to which he listens is uttered in accents of threatening, he would tremble with holy dread—if in accents of love and promise, he would thrill with hope and vibrate with joy. Whatever the character of the sacred strain may be, his first desire, his highest pleasure is, to feel a corresponding emotion—to surrender his heart to the heavenly impulse.

## IV.

And then, fourthly, the subject intimates that all human instrumentality, in the service of God, depends for its efficiency on the same condition—that of harmony with the Divine character. This, indeed, is true of man's instrumentality in the physical world. Even here we *originate* nothing. We only avail ourselves of the laws which God has

appointed—laws which are already in operation. We may talk poetically and proudly of the empire of science, and of science chaining the elements to its chariot wheels; but just as true is it that the elements chain man himself to *their* wheels. He can move only as they move. If "knowledge is power," it is only the knowledge of their laws and forces. For this knowledge he has patiently to wait, perseveringly to solicit; and having discovered it, he has humbly to follow in the direction which it prescribes. To think of prescribing to it would only teach him his impotence and convict him of folly.

But that which is only folly in the material world, in the spiritual world becomes crimson with guilt. That which in our own house might pass for mere inconsideration, in *His* house becomes avowed rebellion. There, secondary causes or means are more apparent; here, the great First Cause himself appears. There, the hand of human instrumentality is seen; here, He makes bare His own arm; and to put that aside, or to substitute anything in its stead, is to offer Him an indignity of the deepest die. To overlook His arrangements, indeed, in the natural world, and to act as if we could do without them, is to put an affront on the power, and wisdom, and goodness they display. But here, besides His power, and wisdom, and goodness, here His grace reigns—here His glory is enshrined—here, to use the emphatic language of inspiration, here His honour dwelleth—His honour, for which he is jealous—His honour, for the exhibition of which the universe exists, for the vindication of which that universe is ever armed and ready. An insignificant creature like man values his honour above his life—deems it insulted by a look, tarnished by a breath, and freely lavishes his blood to redeem it. But the honour of the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, who shall speak of that but with the profoundest reverence? And yet here it is not only to be spoken of, it is to be magnified. Yes, wonderful as the truth may appear,

it is actually committed to our hands to be brightened and displayed. The highest angel has not a greater charge, a more sacred trust committed to him than this. But do you not see how the trust is to be discharged? As He is the great inhabitant of eternity, the first and only efficient Cause, He comes to see if you who assemble here are arrogantly aspiring to be a cause also. Oh! let Him see that you are content to rank as an effect, to take the humble position of an instrument in His hands, and He will count Himself honoured. As He is the First, He comes to see if you are practically acknowledging Him to be the Last also, or whether you are seeking to be your own end; let Him see you content to occupy the relation of *means* to His glory as the *end*, and He will count Himself honoured. Is He the prime mover of all spiritual activity? Let Him see you, not acting as if you could originate an instrumentality of your own, but linking on all your machinery to His agency, evincing a deep conviction that if anything you do moves, and moves in the right direction, it must be, not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit as the moving cause. Is He the great source of spiritual usefulness and success? He will come to see if He can trust *you* with success, or if you are likely to appropriate the honour of that success to yourselves, and thus rob Him of the glory. Let Him see you, on every fresh instance of prosperity, taking it to His footstool—hastening to cast it as a crown at His feet—casting yourselves there, and exclaiming, "Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the glory." Is He the High and Lofty One? As such, He occupies a height which gives Him a purchase over the universe. He can raise His intelligent creatures to as lofty a point as their natures can bear; but, then, if they would be lifted up, they must be found in the place and the attitude which He prescribes. Let Him see you in that place and that moral attitude—lying low, *prostrate* at His footstool. He that so humbleth himself shall be exalted. Is His very name "Holy"? As such, He hath provided and set

forth a propitiation to take away sin; for till that is removed He cannot commune with us; and He comes to see if His ministers are setting forth that propitiation also, or if they have thrown a covering over it to conceal it. Yes, the first object which He here looks for is the altar of the cross, and what is on it, and whether it occupies a central and conspicuous place. He comes as a hearer—listens to the prayer—for there is but one plea which prevails with Him; listens to the sermon—for it is not enough that the discourse be not opposed to His Word. The apostle reminds us that even the book of the covenant—the Bible—was sprinkled with blood, and so must be every discourse derived from it. Every house of God should, in this respect, be an epitome of His universal empire—in *that* the atonement is the centre around which all His purposes revolve; and here the cross should form the great central object, about which everything else should circulate and be sprinkled with its blood. As His name is Holy, He has provided the agency of the Holy Spirit, and He comes here to impart and infuse it; let Him see every high thought and imagination cast down, and find you panting, languishing for His Spirit as those who feel they must perish without it. As the Holy One, He comes to see if the proud heart is humbled—if the sinful heart is contrite—if the hard and insensible heart begins to quiver with sensibility and to tremble at His word. Yes, said the Saviour, "the Father seeketh such to worship Him." How rare must they be, that He should have to seek them! What a value must He set on them, that He should deign to seek them! And He does value them—they are the only objects on earth which He does value—His only real worshippers; all besides are His enemies—labouring to do without Him—in open or disguised hostility against Him. He comes to His house, therefore, seeking such to serve Him. Yes, He comes here; and shall He be disappointed? He is approaching now—He is come—He standeth at the door. This is His own impressive representation of Himself,—"Behold," saith

He, "I stand at the door, and knock." Who can imagine the scene of His entrance here without deep emotion?

Suppose, in conclusion, then—suppose that something like it were now to take place; that now, while we are thus assembled, meditating on the love, the condescension, the grace of Christ, the Divine Redeemer were to approach, and, by some undoubted sign, were to signify His arrival, and His desire to enter. How should we prepare to receive him? What searchings of heart would there be! What looks of anxiety exchanged! Unconverted, prayerless man, what could we say to you, but beseech you in few and fervid accents to be reconciled to God? And what could you do, but fall down and cry for mercy? or if your heart were too hard even for this, what could you do but complain of its hardness, and entreat that it might be broken, bruised, and changed into a heart of flesh? And you who seem to be passing, and have long seemed to be passing, from death unto life, what could you do but lament your indecision, and place your trembling heart before him, and cry, "Create within me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a right spirit"? And you who have done this already, what could you do but act on the conviction that the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, and receive Him in the attitude of devout and humble prostration? Oh, what an attractive spectacle would such an assembly present! How effectually would it be prepared for His admission! With what Divine complacency would His eye survey the blessed scene! And as it glanced from one to another, and saw that each breast was bared for His inspection, each soul emptied and prepared for His reception, each heart a bleeding sacrifice, each bosom pining for His grace, enlarging itself for His reception, inviting Him to enter and take entire possession; and as His countenance beamed and brightened with love, who would not feel that the windows of heaven were about to be opened—that a time of refreshing had come, the happy results of which it was impossible to foretell! True, His own

declaration in the text would lead us to expect great things, for He engages "to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones"—to issue the proclamation, "Peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near; and I will heal him, saith the Lord." But He exceeds His promises. Every broken heart would be bound up, every wounded spirit made whole, every prostrate soul would be raised—the whole would be cheered and revived by a heavenly current of vital influence from the Fountain of life itself.

Brethren, the Majesty of heaven has entered, and is here. Why should not this assembly present to His eye the aspect we have described—welcome His arrival, and receive His blessing? Motives are not wanting. Think *how He would count Himself honoured.* And is that nothing? "Here," He would say—"here will I dwell, for I have desired it; in the world at large I meet only with foes—but here are my friends; there my every claim is disputed—here they are enthroned; there everything is pervaded by a spirit of hostile self-sufficiency—here every idol is abolished, every rival cast out, every weapon of hostility laid aside, and the Cross is triumphant. This is the place of my rest; here there is no symptom of resistance, or even of indifference—here every look is adoration, every attitude submission, every heart a vessel empty to receive my grace. Here will I rest; here can I be as merciful and gracious as I please—here solace myself with blessing, and receive nothing but adoration and praise in return."

Think of the example of Christ in this respect—the entire harmony of His character with the character of God constitutes the very heart of His example. He had a will of His own, as distinct from the will of the Father as His person was distinct; but though distinct, it was not different, or at variance with it. The highest effort of His own will was to do that supreme will. His human nature was consecrated as a temple for the enthronement of that will. His cross

owes all its power to its entire harmony with that will. On the same account it is that God also hath highly exalted Him—for He now reigns in the same spirit in which He suffered—His throne is just as much in a line with the will of God, and in harmony with it, as His cross was. And this spirit of subordination, I say, constitutes the very heart of the example which He hath left us. We must place ourselves in harmony with His cross, be content to be as humble as the consciousness of our guilt can make us, as contrite as the sight of the cross can render us.

Think, too, of the happiness of such a state of mind. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God." Out of harmony with God, everything is at discord with them—is against them. The troubled sea, ever restless and labouring without an object, and turbid with its own agitation, is the appropriate figure by which the prophet, in the context, describes the restlessness of the wicked. There is but one spot in the universe where the creature can find rest—at the feet of God. Brought back to that position, everything is at peace with him, for he himself is at peace with God. There he first finds rest—enjoys the exquisite satisfaction of confessing himself nothing, that God may be all—of going out of himself, and losing himself in God—of finding his heaven in the smile of God!

And what would this be but a foretaste of millennial bliss—an epitome of heaven itself! For when the design of the whole Gospel constitution shall be answered, what will the result be but that no flesh shall be found to glory in His presence—that everything shall be seen in harmony with His character, and redounding to the glory of His grace! The only change will be, that having dwelt with the humble and contrite on earth, He will then translate them to dwell with Him in heaven; that as they once accorded to Him his proper glory, then they will be admitted to behold His glory, and to enjoy it.

By our regard, then, for the glory of God, for the example

of Christ, for our present peace and our future blessedness, let us, as if He were now visibly present, bow down our hearts before Him. "Oh, come let us worship and fall down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!" Let us surrender, let us place our hearts before Him, let us entreat Him to dwell with *us;* and whatever we possess which can be made to subserve His glory, let us entreat Him to sprinkle it with cleansing, consecrating blood, and to make it entirely His.

# SERMON III.

## THE CONDESCENDING GOD.

2 CHRON. vi. 18—"But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!"

THERE are *views of God* which make the mind swoon and sink. Such are conceptions of that power whose mere volitions are acts, and of that knowledge to which there is neither past nor future, in our sense of the terms, and of that duration which knows nothing of succession, measurement, or date. These are subjects of which the strongest mind can only get a momentary glimpse. To *see* them is to stagger and fall. It is to look over the edge of a precipice where the mind sees no footing, *nothing* but a bottomless abyss, and can only cry out, with the apostle, "O the depth!" There are scriptural *events*, too, which captivate the mind as often as they are thought of—the birth of light, the drowning of the world, the giving of the Law. And there have been *sublime situations* in which man stood for God, or was invested with a portion of His majesty; as when Moses held back the arm of God from destroying Israel, and when he was seen coming down from the mount with God's law-tables in his hands, and God's radiance resting on his face.

At the opening of the Jewish temple, in the utterance of the text, these *three* elements of interest, the sentiment, the event, and the situation, were all combined. A sensuous unreflecting mind might have been most taken with the

mere accessories of that august scene; for there was a nation present to witness the solemnity, a temple of which the plan had come from heaven, the pomp and procession of the priests as they slowly marched with the sacred ark through the courts and up the steps to "the holiest of all," the roll and swell of the music as the ark advanced, the sudden pause which told the waiting nation that the ark had reached its resting-place, the slow descent of the Shekinah, a cloud of dusky splendour which filled the house, and the instant prostration of the priests before that awful symbol of the Divine presence. Doubtless all this was impressive, and was meant to impress. But it was when the king, trembling with the conscious grandeur of his position, ascended the brazen platform, and spread forth his hands in prayer, that the scene became most impressive; it was when his mind caught for a moment a view of God's immensity and condescension, and staggered under the weight of the sentiment, that the scene became most spiritual; and when, in that grand intercessory act, he was seen connecting earth with heaven, and the cloud came down and met his ascending prayer, it was then that he rose to the highest point of true sublimity, and prefigured the office of Him who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." God help us, though we look for no visible cloud of glory—God help us so to enter into the sentiment of the text as to desire and be prepared for a manifestation of the Divine presence appropriate to this service.

## I.

And, first, let me call your attention to the fact of the Divine greatness; because it is only in the view of that that we can be prepared to appreciate the Divine condescension. "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee!" 1. What a view have we here of the *immensity* of God! We ourselves are among the stars, careering through space, myriads of miles distant now from where we were at the beginning of the service, but though perpetually changing

our place in the universe, ever surrounded by His presence, and enclosed by His essence. And could we speed our way to scenes beyond all that eye has explored, or even thought has reached, what should surprise us there to behold creations in process—new worlds taking their appointed place—sudden manifestations of the present God! But even the limits of the created universe are no limits to Him. There, where no wing has yet sped, no creative fiat yet taken effect, where all is silence, solitude, and awful gloom, God is already present. And could we imagine ourselves to be even there, what should surprise us to behold some token of the Shekinah—some vision of the present God? "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but He himself contains and is the place of all being. Infinite space is but the dark background on which He is ever writing out His unfinished and unutterable name in characters of living light. Immensity is but His temple, and at any moment He could fill and flood the whole with glory.

2. Equally awful is God's relation to duration, or His *eternity.* Mentally, I can construct a bridge of stars to take me back—I can imagine that each of the countless stars was formed in succession, and that myriads of ages elapsed between the formation of each; but if my mind could span the sum of all those myriads, could dart back a thought to the moment when the first star beamed on the regions of space, I should feel that I had only reached the starting-point for the preceding eternity—I should feel that that star of which I had caught a glimpse could only be regarded as the first lamp that was lighted up to guide the way back to His dread abode. But I *can* transport myself still further back. Passing the limits of the created, I can *think* myself back into the presence of the Unseen and Eternal, feel myself there alone. And oh! with what additional dreadfulness is the majesty of this darkness invested when I remember that it is the majesty of solitude. He has inhabited this eternity alone.

Never has this stillness been broken. No ray of created light has ever beamed across this darkness. This boundless space has never owned a world. No seraph bows before His throne. Whatever is, is God. Yet, after all, I quit the awful scene with the humbling conviction that, far, far back as I have gone, I have made no approach whatever to the understanding of His eternity.

3. Here is also a recognition of God's infinite *supremacy;* for "the heaven of heavens" is the region of angelic blessedness, and the Uncontainable fills and overflows even that. Could we scale that height—could we ascend and obtain a view of those thrones towering above thrones, and, having reached an unknown height, could we then see others loftier still, stretching away beyond our furthest sight, what should we see, after all, but a few of the lowest of the steps which lead up to His throne? He speaks, and the most exalted of the principalities look up to Him, and feel that there is but One High and Lofty; that, compared with Him, all created height is His footstool, all other dignity seated in the dust. He looks on them, and they feel that "He humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven." Lofty as their natures and countless as their myriads may be, there is a sense in which He must ever continue to dwell as perfectly alone through the eternity to come, as He did in the sublime and appalling solitude of the eternity past. He still inhabiteth eternity. It is the only habitation which suits His infinite greatness. He can never come forth from it, so as to bring Himself within created limits. On account of His incomparable greatness, He will never be able to bring Himself within the comprehension of His loftiest creatures. Retired within the depths of His own immensity, they will never be able to approach and behold Him *directly.* For all they know of Him, they will ever feel that they are indebted to a medium of His own devising, and that, without that glorious medium, the whole created universe, including themselves, would only have constituted a living altar, with this inscrip-

tion, "To the unknown god." And after they shall have continued to advance through interminable ages from throne to throne, and from one height of glory to a higher still, the loftiest summit will only give them a more enlarged and commanding prospect of His boundless perfection.

II.

And will this Uncontainable Being actually manifest Himself to man—limit and localize His manifestation—bring Himself into relations of time and space—"dwell with man on the earth?" Here is, secondly, the *fact* of the Divine *condescension.* The question, "Will He do so?" is the language, not of doubt, but of astonishment, and may suggest what a world of speculation there would have been on the subject, had it been left to mere conjecture. But all such conjecture is now extinguished by the *fact.*

And here be it remarked there was but one religion in the ancient world that knew anything of a *condescending* God—but one—the Jewish. The so-called gods of Olympus could be mean, intriguing, self-debasing; but they had it not in their power to condescend. Morally, they had no height from which they *could* stoop. But the history of the Divine conduct, as recorded in the Bible, had been, from the first, a history of condescension—of acts by which He had been training the human mind to look higher and yet higher for His throne, in order that man might be able to feel His condescension in stooping from that height to this depth. And so well had the eye of the Psalmist been trained to this heavenward gaze, that, looking up through all the ascending ranks of idol-gods and the loftier hierarchies of heaven, he saw the throne of God immeasurably beyond, and sublimely sang, "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high; who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth?"

Look back to God's first act of condescension. Sin might have produced eternal silence; the Almighty might have

withdrawn and enclosed Himself for ever within the depths of His everlasting dwelling-place. Yet it was to man the sinner that He took the first step in His career of condescension by *speaking to him.* He *broke* the fearful silence which sin had produced, and which might have lasted for ever; and every accent He uttered was an accent of love. He went on addressing us, adding promise after promise, and opening, every time He spoke, fresh views of His excellence, and furnishing additional proofs of His condescension.

Time rolled on; and though the depravity and guilt of man went on increasing, there comes before us in the text another stage in the Divine regard. He appoints a *place* for the symbol of His presence to dwell in, and where man might be always welcome to approach and commune with Him. This was a vast advance in the condescension of God. It seemed to say that His love for man knew no limits; it seemed to place earth in the very neighbourhood of heaven. But amazing as was this stoop of mercy, it was literally true. There, through a long succession of ages, He continued to meet with His people, and to commune with them from off the mercy-seat. There Penitence often smote upon its breast till its tears were wiped away. There conscious Guilt lost its tormenting sting and first found peace. Fear lifted up its eye and smiled. Faith looked up in the face of God as it stood with its hand on the head of the victim. There prophets, and kings, and the righteous men of many nations bowed down in prayer and found that which they sought—acceptance with God.

And has not this, we might have said, exhausted the proofs of the Divine condescension? All this, astonishing as it was, was only preliminary. What if He should take our nature and make a temple of that! This, indeed, was an act beyond human conception. What! will God in very deed dwell with man—*as man*—upon the earth? "Great, indeed, is the mystery of godliness. *God* was manifest in the *flesh!*" Yes, by a mysterious act, He took our nature into union

with His own, and actually walked the earth, conversed with us, pitied, wept over us—by all the arts of a Divine compassion [illegible] His love to us. This was a stoop of condescension immeasurably deep. Beyond this, we might have said, He cannot go—even He cannot go. He has now reached the lowest point to which He can descend, for He has reached the low level of earth—placed Himself on a footing with ourselves. This is the utmost limit of His grace.

"But my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. You have not yet seen the greatest sight of all—the HEART of God. His condescension you have seen, and the very [illegible] of His compassion, but the love of His heart—the heart of His love—remains to be seen. And will He in very deed shew us that? Yes, one lower, deeper stage of grace remains. Unveil that cross and see. He hath humbled Himself to that—even the death of the cross. It was His only mode of shewing us His heart. It is infinite love labouring to expound itself—agonizing to utter the fulness of infinite love. Apart from that act, a boundless ocean of love would have remained for ever shut up and concealed in the heart of God. But now it has found an ocean-channel. Beyond this He cannot go. Once and for ever the proof has been given—"God is love."

## III.

Who does not feel thirdly the wonderfulness of the Divine condescension? And what part of His conduct is not condescending, and what part of His condescension is not a wonder—an abyss of wonder? Ascend to the first act—creation—for here the wonder begins. That He should in any sense have come forth from the depths of His eternity—that He should have deigned to be a Creator—that He should have put off from Him the glory in which He had been eternally enshrined, laying aside an eternal weight of it, in order to create—that He should descend to be omnipotent for such a purpose. Will He it might have been said

beforehand — will God in very deed do this? For the creation of the universe, vast as it is, might be infinitely enlarged and endlessly repeated, and still it would be less *by infinity* than the power which produced it. This itself, therefore, is condescension infinite—the condescension of His power—in the sublime language of Scripture, "the *hiding* of his power;" not so much its display as its concealment. And then that, having made creatures, He should vouchsafe to be called supreme in relation to such creatures—to beings the highest of whom is by necessity of nature infinitely below Him—to stoop to such grandeur is itself condescension. And then that He should submit to be worshipped—worshipped by beings who will never be able fully to comprehend Him, never be able to think of more than one part of His character at a time, or of one illustration of one part, so that at the very moment when they are most lost in admiration by thinking of that one, all the other myriad illustrations of His character will be unthought of; and after they shall have been enlarging their conceptions of His glory for myriads of years, that they should still have to remember that what they then know of Him is as nothing compared with what remains to be known of Him!

But all this, a man might say—much as it enlarges my views of the Divine condescension—all this I can believe. It relates only to His *natural* greatness. Low and limited as His creatures may be, they are not as yet supposed to have revolted, *sinned*. But what if, after condescending to make a creature, that creature should labour to unmake himself, or to make himself something essentially differing from what he was? What if, after condescending to allow Himself to be worshipped, that creature should refuse to worship Him—should worship other objects even in His very presence—worship *himself* rather—should labour to forget HIM, and, failing in that, should fill with enmity against Him—what could be expected then? what could condescension itself do in such a case?

What might have taken place we know; and it is that which makes what He has done so amazing. Here the real wonder begins. That he should have stooped to ask for a hearing in a world filled with the noisy praises of itself and its idols; that amidst that din, He, the Uncontainable One, should have deigned to republish the forgotten fact of His own existence; that He whose heaven is one vast temple, sacred throughout to His worship, should command the erection of a house upon earth, where he knew that idolatry would come up to His very doors, and even obtrude into His presence; and that then, when the crisis required, when justice required the sinner himself or a substitute, that that substitute should have been found in the person of "God manifest in the flesh"—that the Invisible himself should have assumed a material form—that the Supreme should in any sense have become subordinate, voluntarily placing Himself at the bar of justice in our stead, inviting the stroke which should have fallen upon us, bowing His head, and becoming obedient unto death; this is a scale of voluntary condescension in which we behold Him stooping lower and lower still, till He has reached a point where even inspiration stands lost in wonder, and can find relief only in adoring exclamations—exclamations which are among the most welcome parts of the Word of God, because they relieve the fulness of the burdened heart—"Herein is love!" "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"

## IV.

But, fourthly, this wonderfulness of the Divine condescension is no valid objection to its reality and truth. This is the very gist of the text, that, amazing as the conception is, it is yet a fact. 1. Let us not be told by a pretended philosophy that such a Divine interposition is out of all proportion to man's importance in the universe. This is to assume that all other worlds are inhabited. But why so? If there is an infinitude of space unoccupied by any world, may not

the countless worlds be unoccupied by any inhabitants? But let us grant them to be inhabited; the objection unwarrantably assumes that the Divine manifestation *here* must have prevented displays of the Divine presence elsewhere. Whereas, for aught we know to the contrary, at the very moment when the cloud of glory was descending on Mount Zion—at the very period of the incarnation—different displays, but displays equally suited to their different spheres, may have been taking place in distant parts of the universe. The objection rashly assumes, further, that the incarnation of the Son of God can have no relation to any other part of the universe; for if it have, the objection fails. His relation to our world, indeed, will always be specific and unique. But we can conceive of no world to which His incarnation and death for the redemption of our fallen race can be made known, without having their views of God enlarged, and their motives to holiness increased. As an affair of moral government, it is fraught with interest for all the subjects of God's universal empire. As an illustration of the Divine character, it contains a grand promise and prediction of unknown good for all the futurity of duration. The planetary insignificance of the earth, the very circumstance which man makes a reason for disbelieving it, may be an element investing it, in the eyes of other worlds, with transcendent interest. They may behold in it only a further illustration of the principle on which God uniformly acts, of "choosing the things which are not to bring to nought things that are." They may see in it a designed intimation that there is no world, however insignificant—no islet in space, however remote—which shall not be filled with His glory. Once they might have been ready to ask, "Can any good thing come out of man's Nazareth, the earth?" And the Divine reply may have vibrated through far-off realms of creation, "And thou, earth, though thou be least among the thousands of the sky, the Bethlehem of space, yet out of thee shall He come forth who shall be ruler over all, whose goings forth have been

from of old, from everlasting." The Cross shall have the universe for its setting. From it rays of glory shall stream forth to the highest heaven and to the furthest space. This loftiest display of love shall be the central object for the eyes of all—"the Lamb in the midst of the throne."

2. Neither let a mock humility pretend that such condescension is too great for man's belief. Under the plea of his own littleness, man presumes to prescribe it to Infinite Greatness. Feigning unworthiness to lie at the Divine footstool, he yet ascends the throne, and usurps the prerogative of Supremacy. He confesses to be not worthy of a Divine thought, but he assumes to be capable of deciding what the thoughts of the Infinite should be. His objection is, that the means of mercy are too vast for man to believe. The reply is—God's own reply—that they are not too vast for God to employ. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The right point of view, then, is not from the dust in which man is lying, but from the throne on which God is sitting. The *reason* of the whole is in *God*.

Do you not see then, that, wanting in wonderfulness, the Divine manifestation would have been wanting in analogy with creation and providence—wanting in the very means of authentication as a Divine act. It only stands in a line with other wonders. But the end to be obtained by *it* is incomparably greater. Creation and providence are but introductory and preparatory to it. He who brought forth the patriarch from his tent on the plains of Mamre, and said, "Look now towards heaven, and tell the stars if thou be able to number them," and added, "So shall thy seed be," may be regarded as saying to us, "Survey the magnitude of the material universe, and let the impression of my power, which the spectacle is calculated to produce, prepare you to expect a corresponding display of my love." And is not this immensity of love what man needs? Tell me not of the vastness of the universe. Man can be satisfied with nothing less

than the God of the universe. Give him time, and he will spend this said universe; give him time, and he will exhaust it world by world, and will "cry out for the living God;" and the Divine manifestation in Christ is God's method of giving *Himself to* man, by first entering into his condition and giving Himself *for* man.

3. Nor let the mere formalist limit the displays of Divine condescension to the past. He is horrified at the impiety which doubts whether God has been manifest at all, but is quite content that He should manifest himself no longer. The ordinances of religion are with him memorials of past, rather than means of present grace—tombs rather than temples. True, God has been in the past, and will be in the future, as we do not look for Him in the present. Looking back, Shekinah and vision are there, miracle, prophecy, and inspiration, an incarnate Saviour, and a descending Spirit. We expect not now a repetition of *such* scenes. Looking forwards, we regard the future as stored with supernatural events. There lie the mystic scenes portended by the last vials of Apocalyptic vision. And there, in the dark background, are seen to loom the awful grandeurs of the second coming. And are not many of us living on our faith in that past and that future, rather than on our faith in a present God? Like the servants in the parable, whose lord had gone away into a far country, have we not often the feeling that our Lord is, in some sense, absent from us? and are we not too ready practically to adjust and resign ourselves to the idea? The complaint is, not that we make too much of any one part of Divine truth, not that we make too much of its history of the past, or of its predictions of the future, but that we too much slight its promises made to the present. God *was* in the history, He *will be* in the prophecy, but He *is* in the promise—"A God near at hand, and not afar off." "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there *am* I in the midst of them." The history and the prophecy are only for limited times, the promise is for all

time, large as the heart of God, and the fullest utterance of it. The history tells me only what God *has* done, and the prophecy what He *will* do; but the promise tells me what He *might* do—do, if the restraints which our want of prayer and faith impose were all cast off—do, if He might but "make bare His arm"—do, if we would but accept the challenge of His grace. "Prove me now," saith the Lord.

And is not every truly Christian Church a proof that the manifestation of God is still in process, and His condescension unabated? Wonderful as that condescension is, they can dispense with all *formal* proof of it. They can no more doubt their own experience, than Solomon could doubt that he saw the descending Shekinah. And as often as they enjoy "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," they are seized afresh with holy amazement that He should unveil His presence to them, should even call them into His high and holy service. And yet He does this. And He does it in a manner as if He were really dependent on our services. For He not only calls us, He urges and entreats, and even offers to reward us, though we can never be otherwise than unprofitable servants. If we neglect His first invitations, He repeats them; if we faint in His service, He supports and encourages us; if we decline from His service, He follows and brings us back to it again. He stoops to do that which we should count it a degradation to do to a fellow-man. He reminds us that angels are our fellow-servants, calls us co-workers together with Himself, even engages to applaud us at last in the face of the universe with a "Well done, good and faithful servants." Can we doubt, then, that God does dwell with man upon the earth? We believe even that, as the result of this amazing condescension, man—penitent, renewed, sanctified man—will go to dwell with God in heaven.

## V.

What then, fifthly, are the means of securing the Divine presence, and the emotions suitable to it? Tell me, if you

can, a more important inquiry than this. Were our men of science to be assured that the atmosphere here, in this place, contained some subtle element nowhere else to be found, an element unique, mysterious, capable of the most extensive application, and certain of immortalizing whoever might succeed in discovering it, what untiring efforts would be made to elicit it! No number of failures would induce them to desist. No apparatus would be deemed too costly to insure success. To develop, to analyze, and to apply it, would be the cheerful occupation of their life. Or, were there some one spot on this wide earth where the Divine Presence was *seen*—the earth's holiest of all—where whoever entered heard the voice of God, saw coruscations of His glory, slept only to have celestial visions, and awoke only to feel that all around was instinct with the Divine Presence—who would not make a pilgrimage thither, however remote, and what a profound satisfaction would be felt, though life should be half spent in reaching it!

Brethren, that pilgrimage would end only in disappointment if the sacred precincts were entered with an *unprepared* heart; and with a *prepared* heart the pilgrimage is unnecessary. The Presence we seek is "not hidden from us, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that we should say, Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us? Neither is it beyond the sea, that we should say, Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us? It is very nigh unto us." It is close to us. It is here! Without the heart to desire, and the eye to perceive it, it might, indeed, as well be far off —at the very outskirts of the universe. There are, you know, chemical experiments, in which, if a certain condition be wanting, the element sought for cannot be elicited. It is present, waiting, ready to leap into activity the moment the condition is present. But as long as that is wanting, the element is imprisoned, separated by an impassable barrier, and might almost be said to be non-existent. Similarly, the preoccupied mind might sleep at the very gate of heaven—

no celestial dreams would visit it. The worldly mind might find itself in the house of God, "in the holiest of all;" but the cloud of glory would sweep by it unnoticed. A mind keen after earthly objects, and engrossed by the interests of time, might live here three score years and ten, with "the powers of the world to come" all the time surrounding it, soliciting it, pressing in upon it; and yet never once recognize a single indication of the Divine Presence. And he who finds nothing of heaven on earth would find nothing but earth even in heaven. "The pure in heart shall see God;" purity is the condition even of the beatific vision. The pure in heart behold Him here; the impure could not see Him even there. Fancy not, then, that change of place would remedy the evil. All observatories are alike to the blind. Complain not of the conditions of your being as unfavourable to the perception and sense of the Divine Presence. The Psalmist thought not so; *he* felt himself beset by it behind and before, haunted by the omniscient eye, and, if not oppressed, yet consciously surrounded by the living God.

And the ordinances of religion are designed to produce this state of mind. As the Lord, the Spirit, He is present in our meetings for prayer—present to impart and diffuse a Divine life. Let Him see every high thought and imagination cast down, and find us panting, languishing for His aid, as those who feel they must perish without it, and He will manifest Himself unto us as He does not unto the world, filling us with His own life. As the great Source of all spiritual usefulness, He is present in all our religious organizations and societies—present to see if He can *trust us* with success, or if we are ready to appropriate the honour of success to ourselves, and thus rob Him of the glory. Let Him see us, on every fresh instance of prosperity, taking it to His footstool, hastening to cast it as a crown at His feet, casting ourselves there, and exclaiming, "Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory"—let Him see this, and He will not merely manifest His power

to us, He will make us the manifestations of His power to the world. He is present as often as his Word is read, and His Gospel is pressed home on the hearer—present to mark if the proud heart is humbled—if the hard and insensible heart begins to quiver with sensibility. Let his Gospel be thus responded to, and He will make it the power of God unto salvation. Let Him be thus welcomed; and, though no cloud of glory might descend, the grace which it symbolized would be here. No cherubim might be heard crying to each other; but, "I say unto you, there would be joy among the angels in the presence of God." No vision from heaven might brighten on our eye; but the reality would be here, without the imagery—the manifestation of God, without the Shekinah—the Spirit, without the rushing mighty wind—Pentecost in its converting and transforming results—truth in the calmness of its power—love in its purifying flame—God himself in the soul.

Brethren, this is what we want, and this is all we want. And why should we not have it? The Majesty of heaven has entered, and is here. Why should not this assembly present to His eye the aspect we have described, welcome His presence, and receive His blessing? "Oh, come let us worship and fall down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

And now, O God, this house is Thine. Manifest Thy presence here. Fill this house with Thy glory. Never may Thy servants assemble here without expecting Thy presence; never separate without receiving Thy blessing. Often surprise them with the richness of the blessing. Let the Church here be united, holy, prayerful, enlarged, active, filled with all the fruits of the Spirit; and may it adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let the ministry of Thy servant whom Thou hast placed here be eminently useful. May he be valiant for the truth, wise to win souls, suited to the wants of the day, and greatly successful in enlarging the kingdom of Christ. O Lord, we beseech Thee, send now prosperity.

## SERMON IV.

### GOD'S HOUSE THE HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE.

ISAIAH lvi. 7—"Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."

IN the ordinary course of preaching, it is perhaps desirable to limit attention to particular truths, and their personal practical application. Occasions sometimes arise, however, which seem to invite the mind to a loftier range and a more comprehensive view of truth; occasions when, almost unbidden, the past yields up its treasures—and ages, with the men who have made them memorable—dispensations, with the miraculous facts and the sublime disclosures which distinguished them—the futurity of time, with its distant horizon clothed in flames—and eternity, with all the plans of God fulfilled, pass in succession before our eyes. The dedication of a house to the worship and service of God, or the anniversary reopening of such a place, may be regarded as one of those occasions; for it is an event which springs out of all the past, and which stands related to all the future. The subject of the text is of this description, calling up recollections of ancient times and early revelations, and pointing us onwards to a day when, as the grand result of all that God has planned, and Christ has suffered, and the Spirit has effected, the world shall be seen prostrate before God in prayer. This we regard, if not as the principal, as an important doctrine of the text; and this, therefore, we propose, *first*, to illustrate; and, *secondly*, to apply. May the Lord of the

house be graciously present by His Spirit to aid our endeavours and to bless His Word!

## I.

In order to the realization of the glorious scene glanced at in the text, in which the world shall finally be seen prostrate before God in prayer, the first and earliest step necessary was *the revelation of the Divine existence;* "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is;" and "how shall they call upon him of whom they have not heard?" This fact takes us back in thought to the time when the knowledge of God was lost from the earth; when the Lord, looking down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand and seek God, beheld the appalling spectacle of an entire race in apostasy from Him; and when, breaking the fearful silence which sin had produced, He called to His wandering creatures, and proclaimed, I AM. That was an era in the moral history of man; for it was, in effect, giving to a world of atheists a God. There the great Object of Prayer stood revealed before them; had they known Him, the world would have flocked at once in adoration to His feet.

## II.

But, secondly, *Does He take an interest in the affairs of the world?* for, if not, prayer to Him is useless. In answer to this inquiry Sinai rises to view—Sinai, burning with fire, covered with blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and echoing with the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words. God is there—legislating for sinful man. Can you question His deep, deep interest in human affairs? Listen to His law as He proclaims it, and mark how much of it relates directly to your welfare. Mark how it denounces a curse against all who shall neglect the duties they owe to you! How tender it is of your life, denouncing the man who shall even be angry with you without a cause! How jealously

it guards your property, your reputation, everything dear to you! How it throws its ample shield over you and all you have—constitutes itself the watchful guardian of the whole—kindles into a wall of fire around it—thunders forth, "Cursed is every one that attempts to injure him," and requires all the people to say, *amen*—requires the universe to give a solemn pledge that it will be tender of your welfare! The essence of the whole is love; and that essence it seeks to instil into human hearts—binding them all together into one great community of love. Was it possible that man, after that, could question the kind interest of God in human affairs? Apart from the Gospel, nothing in the universe displays the Divine benevolence so much as the giving of the law. Had it been published from Sinai to a holy and an obedient race, it would have been received and enshrined with acclamations of delight. But it was published for a race in rebellious confederacy against Him—a fact which marks His benevolence more strikingly still—published as a proof of the Divine presence among them and of His immediate government over them—and published as a standing protest against human sinfulness, with a view of awakening in the heart a sense of guilt and a loud cry for mercy. Here, then, was God furnishing the world with another great occasion for prayer. Man now not only knew of His existence, but saw that He took a deep interest in human welfare.

## III.

But, thirdly, *Is the great God accessible?* That He takes a benevolent interest in human affairs is evident. If, however, the terrors of Sinai are not laid aside—if that is a specimen of His usual state—who can venture to approach Him? "The Lord said," saith Solomon, "that he would dwell in the thick darkness." Will He emerge from that cloud—dissipate that gloom—and allow man to approach Him? The temple on Sion is an answer to the inquiry. "Let the people build me a sanctuary," saith God, "that I

may dwell among them." This was another stage, a vast advance in the Divine condescension. To shew His own sense of its importance, He supplied the model, and selected the spot, and superintended the erection of the building. When completed, the Majesty of heaven came down and visibly took possession. The very idea that He should do this overwhelmed the mind of Solomon with amazement. "Will God," said he, "in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!" "Will the Divine Omnipresence take up His dwelling here? Is not the expectation too great to be realized?" "No," saith God; "this is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." What amazing condescension was this! He might have paid only a transient visit there; and then we may suppose how greatly would the seasons of His visits have been prized! But how astonishing that He should speak of it as His rest—His permanent abode! Did not the world repair to Him? When it was rumoured abroad that the Lord of heaven had a house upon earth, did not the guilty race come to cast themselves at His feet and sue for mercy?—That was the object of His coming.

## IV.

"But will He," it might have been asked, in the next place, "will He *pardon?* His house may be filled with thunderbolts of justice, and with ministers of destruction, for man has deserved it. Accessible He may be, but is He propitious?" Approach and read the inscription over its gates, "The house of prayer." Then there is hope for the penitent, pardon for the guilty. Let us enter and ascertain. On crossing the threshold and looking around, we find that it is distributed into three parts. We find ourselves at first in the court of the temple; here the principal objects are a great altar of sacrifice, and a laver in which the sacrifices are washed. "What mean that cleansing water, and that bleed-

ing lamb?" They say, as plainly as they can, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," and that the victim whose blood is shed must be spotless.

We advance, and find ourselves in the second part, the holy place. Here the principal objects are a golden candlestick, a table of shew-bread, and an altar of incense; and what mean these objects? They denote that the sacrifice is accepted, that God is propitiated, that He is waiting to illuminate and anoint His worshippers with His Spirit, to feast their souls on living bread, and to accept their praises as grateful incense. "But what means that mysterious veil which conceals the third part of the temple, the holiest of all?" It denotes that sinful man can *fully* approach a holy God only through a Divine Mediator, and that that Mediator is not yet come. But we know what is within. There stands the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat resting upon it, denoting mercy resting on faithfulness; and there are the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat, intimating the reverence with which even mercy itself should be sought, and the profound mystery which it involves. "But what means that mass of dazzling light above?" It is the symbol of the Divine presence—God is there. "And why dwells He there?" That men may come and fall down before Him, and that He may commune with them from off the mercy-seat. Why dwells He there? Do you not see through His gracious design? He makes it His rest, that men may come to Him, and make it their rest. Numbers through successive ages availed themselves of His grace. There Penitence often smote on its breast, till its tears were wiped away. There conscious Guilt lost its tormenting sting, and first found peace. Fear lifted up its eye and smiled. Faith looked up in the face of God, and appealed to the heart of God, as it stood with its hand on the head of the victim. There prophets, and kings, and the righteous men of many nations bowed down in prayer, and found that which they sought—acceptance with God.

## V.

But everything there—gracious as it was, calculated as it was to bring all people in humble prostration before God—existed only in type and promise. It may be asked, therefore, in the next place, "Have those types been accomplished? That temple is gone—its splendours have vanished—its most sacred things have disappeared—the whole economy is abolished—the very nation scattered to the winds of heaven! Are those promises fulfilled?" Oh, what stupendous scenes arise, and present themselves in reply! The fulness of time arrives, and, behold, God sending forth *His Son!* All heaven is wondering and rejoicing, for in His person Divinity and humanity have at length met. Before, they had been only approaching each other; but now they have met, coalesced, and become one. He has taken our nature, and has made a temple of that. God is manifest in the flesh. Calvary appears; there, as our substitute, He is making an infinite compensation for our demerit—washing out the guilt of the world with His blood—dying, that God may never more be angry with man, that man may never more deny or grieve the love of God. The day of Pentecost arrives—behold in its scenes a proof that our Advocate has entered on His office of intercession above, and that His sacrificial plea prevails; for lo! the Spirit is poured out from on high, and thousands bow in meek subjection to His power, constituting at once the means and the pledge that unto Him, as the hearer of prayer, shall all flesh come.

Is it then still asked if the ancient promises have been fulfilled? Let the tears of the sinner, the joy of the saint, the success of the Gospel in every subsequent age, bear witness. Behold in this house itself an adequate reply. Do you look around and ask for the altar of sacrifice? "We have an altar," says the apostle. Though invisible to the eye of sense, the eye of faith beholds it; and on that altar there is a victim; will you not reverently approach and

look upon Him? Mark the majesty and meekness, the dignity and compassion of His looks. It is Christ crucified. It is the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Is not that superior to the Jewish sacrifices? He *is* spotless; His blood cleanseth from *all* sin; by His *one* offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Will you not draw near, and nearer still, and lay *your* hand by faith on the head of this atoning sacrifice? "God hath set him *forth* as a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood." Do you look around here for the ark of the covenant? The *ark* we have not, but the *covenant* we have. What means this sacred book? "All that the ark did once contain, could no such grace afford." "This is the *new* covenant," saith Christ, "the new covenant in my blood," the covenant of life—every page of it proclaims, "Hear, and your souls shall live." Do you look around for the mysterious veil, and for the high priest that enters within it? We know of no veil here to conceal the mercy-seat—we have access into the holiest of all. The only veil we know of is that which separates earth from heaven; and as to our High Priest, He has passed within that veil, He is gone into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. *Our* Advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Everything valuable in the Jewish economy here finds accomplishment, stability, and perfection. And the design of it all is to make His house a house of prayer, a place of friendly meeting between God and man. This was the great object at which He aimed when He dwelt amongst us. Hence the attractions with which He invested the throne of grace, adorning it with precious gifts, on which He inscribed, "Ask, and ye shall receive"—describing Him that sits on it as our Father, waiting to receive us as His children—assuring us that we go there invited and expected as His friends—and placing in our hands a censer filled with

the incense of His own merit, to make our acceptance secure. And still His heart is set on effecting an interview between God and man. Hence the specific design for which He has instituted the ministry of the Gospel is to *beseech* men to be reconciled to God, to cast themselves down at His feet. And hence the office of intercession which He fills in heaven, never quitting His station, never remitting its duties for a moment, but watching and encouraging the sinner as he takes the first step towards the mercy-seat, by declaring, "I will pray the Father for you;" for well He knows that, when brought in penitence to the footstool of mercy, our forgiveness is certain, and the end of the Gospel is gained.

## VI.

But again, admitting that God is thus accessible and gracious, is He thus accessible and gracious *to all?* Ask if the light of day is free for all that see, ask if the air of heaven is free for all that breathe—but ask not if the throne of God be open to all that need salvation. "My house," saith He, "shall be called a house of prayer for *all* people;" and remember He said this under the local economy of the Jews. Is the Gospel Church less open and free than the Jewish temple? Its gates are never to be shut, night nor day! Its blessings are to be offered without money and without price. Its ministers are despatched into all lands with the command, "Preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven. Proclaim that I am now on my throne giving audience to the world. Say to them, all things are mine, come and share them. I possess them for your enjoyment and use; come, and let me confer them upon you. All the riches and resources of heaven are mine, and you may be made the happy recipients; come, and I will bless you with eternal life. Whosoever will, let him come; I cast out none." "My house shall be called a house of prayer for *all* people." "O thou that hearest prayer, to thee shall all flesh come!"

## VII.

And is there ground to conclude that this sublime result shall be realized? "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "I have sworn by myself, the word hath gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear." By what particular changes in the present kind of instrumentality, at what precise period, or to what exact point of perfection the result may be realized, we cannot say, and are not anxious to know. Sufficient is it for us to know that the time shall come, when the world shall be seen prostrate before God in prayer. And then will it be clearly perceived that this has been brought to pass as the result of all that God has planned, and Christ has suffered, and the Spirit has effected. The very mention of His name, then, will be sufficient to bring the world into a posture of adoration. They will come before Him, hungry for His blessing, languishing for His Spirit—coveting, craving the gifts of His grace. Is His throne of mercy open to all? Is His house a house of prayer for *all* people? "O thou that hearest prayer, to thee *shall* all flesh come!" They shall not be satisfied to enjoy Thee alone; they shall go out, and with a friendly violence compel others to come in and share Thy favours with them. "It shall come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord, and to pray before the Lord." Churches shall come to adore Him, cities to consult Him, nations to surrender to Him, all the kindreds of the earth to fall down before Him. They shall not be content to praise Him alone—they shall feel as if they wanted help, the help of the world, to raise a song adequate to His praise, and a prayer equal to the ardour of their desires. "And it shall come to pass, that from one new

moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord."

Then man will have found his only proper place, will have returned to the only spot in the universe which becomes him—at the feet of God. And having found his proper place, his ultimate end, there will he rest—confessing himself nothing, that God may be all—going out of himself and losing himself in God, finding his heaven in the smile of God. Then God will have recovered His proper glory—every idol will be abolished, every rival power cast out—the eyes of all will wait upon Him—all flesh will be hanging upon Him, staying themselves upon Him—He will be seen by the universe as the centre of a lapsing creation, the support and stay of a sinking world. Then the design of the whole Gospel constitution will be completed—"That no flesh should glory in his presence"—everything will have redounded to the glory of His grace. And when all flesh shall thus be seen prostrate before God in prayer, what will it be but a prelude to the worship of heaven—what will remain but that the whole should be transferred to the employment of praise above! Infinite Love, ascending the throne and putting on the crown, shall sit down and enjoy an eternal Sabbath of love! while the myriads of the redeemed and glorified, casting their crowns at His feet, shall ascribe their happiness to Him, and the jubilee of eternity shall begin!

## VIII.

1. Brethren, to this point everything in the mediatorial government of Christ is tending with the directness and force of a law. To this end, therefore, every event in His Church, every movement of His people, should be intentionally subordinated. Viewed apart from this ultimate design, the most magnificent projects of man become puerile; viewed in connexion with it, things in themselves of very slender account swell into infinite importance. It hallows whatever it touches, ennobles and perpetuates whatever it employs. Brethren,

such is the fact in relation to this and every similar edifice. Regarded merely as a structure raised for the honour of a religious denomination, it is little more than a few particles of fabricated dust; but regarded as pointing to the great end of which we are speaking, its foundations rest on the deep-laid purposes of God—its topstone touches the throne of God—its dimensions on all sides stretch away into infinity—it is built into and forms a part of the vast system of means by which God is working, and which fills the universe. Not more certainly is it connected, as a material fabric, with the universal laws of gravitation, and, as such, exerting a physical influence through all space, than it stands connected, as a moral means, with the universal government of God. Yes, there is a sense in which even the temple of Jerusalem still stands. Though, in a *literal* respect, not one stone of that sacred pile remains upon another, in the moral influence which it exerts over the Church of God, it still lifts up its sacred head—its fires still burn—its victims still bleed—its day of atonement still returns. We have seen them this morning, we shall see them in eternity. Brethren, there is a sense in which all the great events and solemn transactions related in the Bible may be regarded as having taken place within these walls. Here they *will* come, as they often have come, in the ministry of the Gospel, and occur again. Here Eden will bloom, and man will fall. Here God will speak, and Sinai will burn. Here prophets will repeat their sacred strains, and priests present their offerings. Here, "before your eyes, Jesus Christ will evidently be set forth crucified among you;" and here again will be heard, in effect, the rushing mighty wind and the cries of penitence on the day of Pentecost. By linking it on to the great machinery of Providence, all the influences of the past come and gather around it, and settle down upon it, while, for the future, all heaven is awake with expectation; for, as a house of God, a page is opened for it in the book of His remembrance—as a house of prayer, it takes its stand among the means by which God is reducing

and restoring all things to Himself; it forms a part of that vast combination of means by which all things and all men are to be borne on into the presence of God, there to fall prostrate before Him, and to acknowledge Him all in all.

2. The question will be entertained, then, by every Christian mind—How may this sacred place be made most effectually, more effectually than ever, to subserve this great end? The text suggests the answer—By making it literally a house of prayer. Every power in the universe is regarded by God as more or less opposed to Him, except the power of prayer, and the means which prayer has sanctified. Every human habitation in which God is not worshipped is a fortress raised in hostility to Him, and the family which inhabits it is in arms against Him. On the other hand, wherever prayer is made—and in the exact proportion in which it is made—there He beholds a spot reclaimed from the powers of darkness, and subjects swearing allegiance to His throne. The erection or enlargement of a place, therefore, professedly dedicated to prayer—to public and united prayer—is, we may suppose, an event which occasions joy among the angels in the presence of God. "Behold," they say, "another house of prayer—another point of friendly communication between earth and heaven—another erection whose hallowed attraction shall draw to itself the fertilizing clouds of heavenly grace!" And while we are content with inquiring, as the building rises, to what denomination of Christians it belongs, they are only anxious to know what denomination of prayer will be offered, what kind of suppliants will assemble in it—for well they know that its real prosperity will depend upon *that*—that its final amount of utility for hastening on the grand consummation will depend upon *that*. And while we are meeting, perhaps, and consulting by what specific name it shall be called, the Lord of angels himself is saying to us from heaven, "If it is to be my house, it shall be called *a house of prayer*. The only condition on which it can receive

my blessing, and subserve my ultimate purposes, is by becoming *a house of prayer.*"

Brethren, the world itself was intended to be a house of prayer; every spot on it was meant to be sacred to the worship of God; all its air should have been incense, and all its sounds adoration and praise. That purpose sin attempted to defeat. But, oh! a higher purpose still only waited till the attempt should be made. From that moment a plan of grace has been unfolding, which concentrates within itself all the interest of the world's history, all that is eventful in the universe. And when the consummation of all things shall arrive, what will this world be thought of, think you, but as it has furnished a stage for the unfolding of that plan; and as it was gradually reclaimed, in consequence, from being a house of sin—again converted into a house of prayer, and thus restored to its original design? Let man record its history, indeed, and he would dwell chiefly on topics of war and peace, of pestilence and famine, the changes of thrones and the revolutions of empires; but, as written by the finger of God, these things shall be noticed only as they subserved or opposed His final purpose, while the history of the world, as far as man's instrumentality tended to promote that purpose, shall be chiefly a history of prayer. Preaching itself—benevolent activity itself, except so far as it is associated with devotion—shall be passed over, to record the triumphs of prayer. Many a Christian who once filled the public eye with his active deeds and burning zeal, shall be comparatively unnoticed—and the man of prayer, the wrestler with God, shall be drawn out from his closet obscurity, and proclaimed in his stead; and it shall appear that while the one was only moving earth, the other was moving heaven.

Are we asked for a proof of this? Brethren, a great portion of the world's history *is* written—written by the finger of God. The Bible is God's summary of the history of the world down to the close of the first century of the present

era. What are the deeds—what is the kind of human instrumentality which He has deemed most worthy of record? Oh, if I did not believe you to be sufficiently acquainted with them already, I would say, Paint them on the walls of this sacred place—let those spaces now left in unadorned simplicity be occupied with the principal scenes out of God's history of man's instrumentality. And they would soon be peopled with suppliants in all the postures of devotion—crowded with the various forms and attitudes of prayer. In one place, Abraham would appear interceding for Sodom—and Omnipotence waiting till he had done—the tempest of descending fire suspended in the air—suspended, and ready to be blown away by the breath of prayer. In another, Moses would appear holding back the arm of God, while Omnipotence is saying, as if embarrassed, "Let me alone—let me alone, that I may destroy them." In one compartment should stand the Temple, with the scene of the Dedication—a nation at prayer—and clouds of massive glory filling the house. And in another, the same Temple, with its high priest occupied in the office of twofold intercession—prayer with the voice, and prayer by sacrifice—the prayer of blood. Did Jesus pray? Oh! in a sense more than figurative, He saved the world by prayer. Portray a mountain top, and Jesus on it—prostrate, alone, wet with the dews of night—praying to God with strong crying and tears. And next, a garden—Gethsemane—and Jesus there, praying in an agony which baptizes Him in his own blood. And next, "the place called Calvary," and Jesus dying—offering that great sacrificial prayer, which still pleads, still fills the ear of God, and for the sake of which alone all other prayers are heard. Can the cloven tongues of fire be portrayed? Forget not to represent the apostles on whom they rest, assembled in prayer. Elsewhere, let an angel be seen despatched from the Divine presence, to liberate Peter from prison; but forget not to represent the disciples in a neighbouring house in prayer. But, oh, there is a vision no

human eye but one has seen—a heavenly scene which sums up all—an angel standing at the altar, having a golden censer; and there is given him much incense, that he may offer it, with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, blending with the prayers of the saints, ascends up before God, out of the angel's hand. Yes, here is the summing up of man's instrumentality. Of all the various ways in which he employs himself here—look into that censer, and mark which of them it is that reaches heaven—only that which was sanctified by prayer. When the clamours of a prayerless zeal have subsided, and the undevout deeds which have dazzled and astounded men have spent their force, mark what is left in the censer—only that which partook of the nature of prayer. This is all that lives to reach the skies, all that Heaven receives from earth, all that is ever permitted to ascend before God. Oh, brethren, would you have this place to be named at last in God's history of the world?—let it be distinguished now as a house of prayer; for when that history shall at last be summed up, nothing which had not been in that censer will be named, except to be condemned; and nothing now will ever find a place in *that*, but that which ascends on the breath of prayer.

Here, then, you are to come in the spirit of prayer. The great idea of God, as the object of prayer, is to mingle with all your thoughts of the place, hallowing, ennobling, and lifting it into sacred importance. The very presence of a church or chapel is to be viewed as a perpetual protest against all prayerlessness and irreligion. By it God is to be regarded as repeating His original announcement, and saying to all the passers-by, "I AM—come and fall down and worship me." And by it you are to be regarded as saying to them, "O come, let us worship and fall down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Remembering that you come to obtain an audience of the Great King, you will be punctual and regular in your attendance. You will see to it that "praise waiteth for God

in Zion"—He will not have to wait for it. You will allow no affairs but His to be transacted here; it was the violation of this understood compact with God which led our Lord to say of the temple, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." As if you had just heard of His existence for the first time, you are to come, labouring to realize to your minds the idea of His glorious presence, to feel that He has entered, and is here. As if His providence had only just now taken the affairs of men under its superintendence, or as if you had only now heard of it for the first time, you will come full of confidence and hope; for what if all the princes and philosophers and philanthropists on earth were daily to meet in solemn council on nothing but your affairs, and to devote all their resources to your use, what would that be compared with the glorious truth that God has taken your affairs into His hands, and that here He is always present expressly to receive you? As if the great facts of the Gospel history had only just transpired, as if the clouds of glory which conveyed the ascending Saviour to heaven had hardly yet disappeared, you will come full of expectation and joy, you will anticipate fresh disclosures of His grace, royal favours from His hand. And the more you expect, the more you honour Him. Brethren, are your feelings up to a level with the height of the present occasion? When the ark, the mere symbol of the Divine presence, was carried into the ancient temple, the whole nation of Israel was thrown into a transport of delight, the firmament rang with acclamations. As if nothing could be supposed to be inanimate and insensible on such an occasion, the very gates of the city and doors of the temple are summoned to open of their own accord. Has less taken place here? "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men," is with *you!* Are you sufficiently aware whose house this is? Had an angel come to dwell among you, would it not have been with you a season of excitement and expectation? This is more than Gabriel's house. The great Potentate himself has

come down to dwell among you. Angels are here merely to grace the occasion, and to be sharers of your joy. Adore His condescension. Expect His blessing. Let your affections go forth to meet Him, and your hearts be enlarged to receive Him. Regard it as none other than the house of God, and He will make it the gate of heaven.

4. Again, here everything is to be done with the view of leading to prayer. As we have been proceeding with our remarks, the question may have arisen in some minds, "What! is our piety to take no other form than that of prayer? is it to shew itself in no other way than by prayer?" Such a question, however, could be entertained only where there existed a misapprehension of the nature of prayer, and of the way in which prayer, like an all-pervading element, penetrates and blends with all the various methods in which piety works. Confine yourselves to mere acts of devotion! no, not even in the house of prayer itself; only see to it, that whatever you do, you do it with an ultimate view to prayer. If you preach the Gospel, for instance, you are to bear in mind that that is the most successful preaching which brings men prostrate before God for mercy—that this is the end of the Gospel ministry. And the more vividly you can set forth Jesus Christ crucified among them, the more effectually this end will be answered. Oh, yes, let this place have a Calvary in the midst of it, and on that Calvary let there be a cross, and on that cross a bleeding Saviour—and on that sight, that spectacle of love, let the eyes of the people be kept perpetually fixed. As preachers of the Gospel, our great distinction is that we are ministers of the cross—we have to wait on the cross, to walk around the cross, to point out to the people the wonders of the cross. Have we any pathos? it should be kept for telling them of the cross. Have we any affection for their souls? it should gush forth when we are pointing them to the cross. Have we any tears for them? where shall we shed them but when we have led our people to the cross? when we are there saying to the sinner, "Be-

hold Him—look on Him—He is wounded for your transgressions, bruised for your iniquities, the chastisement of your peace is upon Him, that with His stripes *you* might be healed. Draw nearer to Him—it is of *you* that He is thinking; *that* blood is to wash away *your* sins; *that* life which He is pouring out is the ransom He is giving for *your* soul. Draw nearer still, look into His heart, read the names which are written there—*your* name is among them." And while we are thus entreating the sinner, does he relent? Does he look upon Him whom he has pierced, and mourn? Does he smite upon his breast, crying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner"?—then the end of the ministry is answered—"Behold, he prayeth."

But besides the preaching of the Gospel, all the other ordinances of God's house are to be here administered. And in addition to these, children are to be collected and taught on the Sabbath, pecuniary offerings are to be cast into the Christian treasury, the Bible is to be distributed, visits of mercy are to be paid in the neighbourhood around. It is to be God's house for doing God's work. But however various the agencies and extensive the operations which are here organized and kept in activity, the tendency of the whole must be to bring men to God in prayer. Where will it avail if it stop short of this—if it does not contribute to this? The tendency of all that God does is to lead to this; and if you would act in harmony with His designs, the direction of all your movements for others must be towards the presence of God, the language of all you do for them must be, "We cannot be satisfied till we see them reconciled to God—prostrate before Him in prayer."

5. Here, too, the salvation of the world, and whatever may be instrumentally necessary to that salvation, should be made the subject of prayer. "My house," saith God, "shall be called a house of prayer for *all* people." But as all will not, cannot here pray for themselves, your obvious duty is to come and pray for them. Parents pray for your children, and children

pray for your parents. Let all the various relations of life here come to pray for each other. Pray for the neighbourhood around; there is a sense in which it is committed to your care, in which God is saying to you, as to His people of old, "I will make you, and the places round about my hill a blessing; there shall be showers of blessing." Pray to be made the cloud from which the showers descend, the channel through which they flow. Pray for the prosperity of the whole Christian Church, and remember that in doing that you are in effect praying for the world, for the Great Intercessor above prays not for a party. The names of all the tribes are graven on His breastplate. And does He not love that prayer the most which most nearly resembles his own? Pray, then, for the prosperity of the whole Christian Church. Do you ask what should be the special object of supplication? Ah! it wants more spirituality and distinctness from the world—it wants a higher appreciation of its office, as the instrument of Christ for saving the world—more of the spirit of liberality to sacrifice for Christ—of union, of oneness, in accordance with the prayer of Christ—of zeal which shall burn for the universal triumph of Christ. But one want there is which comprehends the whole—the impartation of the spirit of Christ. Could a convocation be held of all the churches upon earth, the object of their one united cry should be for that promised Spirit. Let that be secured, and in obtaining that we shall obtain the supply of every other want—we should find that we had acquired the same mind which was also in Christ, a benevolence which would yearn over the whole human race—a brotherly love which would combine with the whole body of Christians for the conversion of the world—a zeal which would be ever devising fresh methods of usefulness, practising self-denial, and laying itself out in the service of Christ—and a perseverance which would never rest till the whole family of man should be seated together at the banquet of salvation.

And in coming here to implore an effusion of the Spirit on the Church, remember that you are in effect interceding for

the world; for it is through the instrumentality of His Church that He proposes to save the world. Christians, realize in thought the dignity of your office; you go to God as the earthly representatives of mankind—as intercessors for the world. You pass to the throne of grace through multitudes, myriads, of human beings. Do you not hear them as you go, imploring a place in your supplications? Do you not see all Africa assembled in your path, urging you to go to God for them, to describe their wrongs, to ask for the blessings of the reign of Christ for them? And before you have done pleading for Africa, China comes, with its untold myriads, entreating you to intercede for them. And while yet you are pleading for China, India comes with its tale of lamentation and woe, and entreats you to speak for it. And can you refrain? And when you grow faint, they all combine their entreaties that you cry to God for them louder still, that you call in help, more intercessors, and more still, till all the Church be prostrate in prayer. And when you move to quit the throne of grace, they all in effect entreat you not to leave them unrepresented before God. "Oh, if there be a God," they say, "and if prayer can reach Him, do not leave us thus, or we perish! Our only hope is in the God you worship, the Saviour you proclaim. Pray that the blessings of His grace may be extended to us." Brethren, realize your office thus; let this be a house of prayer for *all* people, and you will be hastening the day when the world shall be given into the hands of the Church, and the whole shall cast themselves at the feet of Christ.

6. Here, then, in this place, and from this day, let a period of enlargement commence in your views of the kingdom of Christ, and in your endeavours to realize them. The opening of the temple was an era in the history of the Jewish Church —let this day be marked as an era, if not in the history of the Church at large, at least in the history of those who propose to worship here. Imagine that a new page is again this day opened in your history—let it prove a fairer page

than any in the past. Review that past—ascertain in what respects it admits of improvement, whether in the regularity of your attendance on the means of grace—in the attention, seriousness, and self-application with which you hear the Word of God—in the amount of your pecuniary contributions to His cause—in your personal activity in His service—or in the fervour and comprehensiveness of your prayers; and in whichever it may be, ask God to record this day, in the book of His remembrance, a holy resolution of instant amendment. Especially see whether you ought not to take a loftier stand than ever in relation to the great interests of the kingdom of Christ. Has He made you partakers of His grace? Then He has taken you, and often takes you still, to a height which commands a view of eternity, and bids you take a comprehensive view of existence—to regard it as a whole—to live for eternity. And having taught you this, as essential to your own personal happiness, He next takes you to another mount of vision, which commands a view of all mankind, and He bids you to pray for them all—to open your heart and embrace them all—to live for the universe. Brethren, let this house be to you that mount of vision. The present is a day of more extended views than the past—a day of greater designs and more generous endeavours. Let this be a house and a church for the day.

My young friends, you whose eye is kindling at these designs—whose hearts beat high at those endeavours—be you as men of God, men *of* and *for* the day. It is your honour to belong to a denomination in the Church whose name stands high up in the lists of Christian fame for benevolent activity and Divine success. On you it is devolving to vindicate and continue that distinction. See that no man take your crown. But, distinguished as your denomination has been and still is, do not be satisfied to equal, be ambitious to excel. Louder voices urge you on than your predecessors have ever heard, and more splendid achievements await your advance. Take enlarged and comprehen-

sive views of duty—devise liberal things—design for the universe and eternity. The Lord of the Church Himself is your leader—angels witness the scene, and the world is waiting to be blessed by your instrumentality.

But when, Christian friends, shall you begin? Let the opening of this place, signalized as it undoubtedly is in heaven, be signalized here by your beginning *now*. The dedication of the temple was distinguished by the prodigious number of the sacrifices offered, and by the solemnity, spirituality, and comprehensiveness of the dedication prayer. Shall not the opening of this place be similarly distinguished? Some of you I know have already contributed of your property liberally. "Well done, good and faithful servants." But, oh, let us hear, as we do of the churches of Macedonia, not only of your liberality, but of the *riches* of your liberality. Give as God gives. Give under the expanding and exhilarating recollection that you are giving in a house of prayer, where you will come to ask Him to give heaven and eternal life—that you are giving towards a house of prayer for *all* people, for whom God hath given His only begotten Son. Give under these impressions, and you will *so* give, that in eternity you will bless God for disposing you to act so much like Himself.

Prayers, too, have been offered—solemn prayers—comprehensive prayers—prayers which the angel having the censer hath presented, and which He who sits on the throne hath heard. But—has each one present joined? Let inquiry be made. Have *all* prayed? What! is there one present whose heart has not united in the general supplication—one who has never yet begun to pray? who, in the very house of *prayer*, while every one around him was engaged in prayer, has yet kept aloof from the throne of mercy? Is he not pointed out at this moment by invisible beings? Are they not gazing at him with pity and wonder? Ought not all present to pray for him? My friend, do you know what you do? Shall we pause while you *do* pray?

Suppose we were now to say to this assembly, in the language of the prophet, "Come now, and let us join ourselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant," and let all who are ready to comply give a sign, would you alone give no sign? would you be the only one to remain out of the holy confederation? Shall we pause, then, while you now pray? Shall we wait while you *now* offer your first entreaty for mercy? Yes—*now*, it will gloriously signalize the present occasion—*now*, the news will be conveyed to heaven—*now*, it would be converting this house at once to its highest purpose—it will be hastening on the day when all flesh shall be seen prostrate before God in prayer, and preparing additional lustre for that day when all the crowns in the universe shall be cast at the Saviour's feet.

# SERMON V.

## THE VOICE OF GOD'S ETERNAL WISDOM.

PROVERBS viii. 30-36—"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.

"Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death."

THIS and the following chapter contain a bold, and, in parts, a sublime personification of Wisdom. But who, or what, is to be understood by this personification? Some would reply that it relates entirely to that *attribute* of the Divine nature which we understand by wisdom. Others, that it refers exclusively to the eternal and only-begotten *Son*, by whom all things were made. And others, again, that it relates exclusively to neither—but partly to that wisdom which begins in the fear of the Lord, partly to the Divine attribute of wisdom, and partly to the Son of God—the second person in the Godhead. Of these views, probably the conclusion of the latter is the nearest approximation to the truth; especially as certain expressions are applied to Christ in the New Testament very nearly resembling some of those which are here predicated of wisdom. At all events, while, on the one hand, none can *demonstrate*

that Christ is here directly intended, on the other, none can *prove* that he is not contemplated; and, perhaps, both will admit that, under certain conditions, language such as that in our text may be justifiably applied to Him. One of these conditions is, that the language be not employed *argumentatively*, or in *proof* of anything relating to Christ, but only for the purpose of illustration; and another is, that when *so* employed, it be only adduced to illustrate such views of the Son of God as are already established by such other parts of Scripture as are admitted by the parties addressed. In compliance with these conditions, it might be said—Do we regard it as speaking of Christ under the appellation of Wisdom? In the New Testament He is called expressly the Word and the Wisdom of God, as declaring His eternal pre-existence. He himself speaks of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was—as intimating that He was even then the object of the paternal complacency. "Behold," saith the Father himself, "behold mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth"—as having taken part in the process of creation. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

But we are disposed to take higher ground than this. Even admitting that all the lofty things which are here predicated of wisdom relate, not to a *person*, but only to an *attribute*, whose is the attribute? Considering the relation sustained by Christ in the great economy of creation and redemption, we entertain no doubt whatever that, not the attribute, but the person in whom the attribute resides, is the eternal Son of God—that the being with whom wisdom is here represented as having resided and rejoiced from eternity is the second person in the Godhead. "For *by him* were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created

by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." And here He comes forth and discloses the wondrous truth, that from the beginning His wisdom had been devising our welfare, and His love rejoicing in the prospective results of His plans; and that on this account He deems himself entitled to our supreme regard. "Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my door." May that blessing be ours on the present occasion!

The train of thought suggested by the text is the following:—That, from eternity, the welfare of man engaged the complacent regard of God our Saviour; that the disclosure of this fact warrants the expectation that all His intercourse with us would be made to harmonize with that welfare; that a place employed for—dedicated to—that intercourse, and devoted to that welfare, may be supposed to be an object of His special regard; and that, if in these respects He fulfils *our* expectations from *Him, we* should fulfil the corresponding expectations which He may be supposed to entertain respecting *us*.

## I.

We learn here, in the first place, that, from the beginning, the welfare of man engaged the complacent regard of God our Saviour.

1. He represents Himself here as deriving delight from the spectacle even of the *material* creation, because it was to be subservient to man. When He surveyed it, He enjoyed the happiness of beholding, *objectively realized*, that which he had hitherto contemplated only in idea. He looked on material objects as visible realizations of eternal types. On comparing them with the originals in His own infinite mind, He beheld the perfect resemblance, and was satisfied.

He beheld them in their prospective application, serving as indexes or intimations of His infinite greatness to myriads of minds which he purposed to create, and so to constitute that each of all these things should operate on them suggestively. He knew, therefore, all the lofty thoughts which these objects would ever suggest, and all the exquisite *intense* delight those thoughts would occasion, and all the holy admiration which the perception of this relation between the material and the mental would ever produce.

He looked on these objects as the first in an endless series yet to come. Now, on taking the first step towards the realization of a noble design, the mind is apt to anticipate consequences, to spring forwards to meet them, and to rejoice in them as if they were already present. In beginning to build a house for God, we already think of it as the gate of heaven. At the opening of the Jewish temple, the mind of Solomon, as his prayer indicates, contemplated the sacred edifice in connexion with all the future leading events of the economy, and thus contributed to invest it with a solemn interest which it will never lose. In His first acts of creation, the Great Architect was laying the foundation of an all-comprehending and eternal temple; and His infinite mind embraced by anticipation all the sublime results—the worshippers, the transactions, the temple filled with the glory of the Divine manifestation—all were present to His mind, and He rejoiced in the glorious prospect.

2. There was the happiness of prospectively beholding the activity, enlargement, and progress of the whole system of creation and providence. He enjoyed that. Great as the pleasure of the mechanist is in looking on his ingenious and complicated machinery *at rest*, it is as nothing compared with what he feels when he sees it in harmonious and useful *activity*. Great as is the satisfaction of the statesman in conceiving a plan for the aggrandizement of his country, it is as nothing compared with what he feels when he knows that his designs are in actual progress—that every agent is at his

post—every means answering its end—and when every hour is bringing him intelligence that his plans, like a richly freighted fleet, are sailing with the wind and tide of circumstance strong in their favour for the desired haven. Now, this the Mediator beheld in relation to His vast designs. Not more certainly is the earth perpetually speeding on its destined course through space, and carrying with it all the momentous interests of humanity, than His plan, freighted with an eternal weight of glory for the creature, and with the weightier revenue of glory to God, is in constant progress. Never for a moment does it retrograde—never pause—never linger. Look on it when He will, He beholds it arrived at that stage where a thousand ages ago He foresaw it would be; and look forwards to what distant age He will, He beholds it, in anticipation, already there arrived. Hence He is often represented in Scripture—in the *text*—as foretasting the happiness arising from the contemplation of this progress. Out of the depths of eternity He looked onwards to the period when creation should commence. "From everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was—when there were no depths—no fountains abounding with water—when as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world"—He anticipated the period when all these should be. Beyond this, He looked on to the remoter period when the earth should be prepared for the reception and sustenance of animal life. He saw its forests wave, its waters roll, its surface clothed with verdure, and the whole replenished with various orders of sentient being. Beyond this, His eye fixed on the time when, in order to the arrival of man, He should "prepare the heavens, and set a compass upon the face of the deep—when He should establish the clouds above—when He should give to the sea His decree that the waters should not pass His commandment—when He should appoint the foundations of the earth." Already in His prescient view the sun had received its final commission to shine—and earth had received its general out-

line of Alp, and Apennine, and Himalaya—of Atlantic, Pacific, and Mediterranean. Already Eden bloomed, and a river went out of it to water the garden. Man's mansion was prepared—but where was the great inhabitant? The theatre was ready—where was the being on whose introduction the mighty drama should begin? Already, in intention, He saw that creature come, radiant in His own image—the crown of creation; and as He saw, He already heard the morning stars sing together—saw earth's first Sabbath dawn—beheld man's earliest act of adoration, and pronounced the whole to be good. Even then, though they existed only in His Divine purpose, He "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights were with the sons of men." He foresaw His blessing enlarging Japheth, and causing him to dwell in the tents of Shem. His purpose had formed the great continents of the earth—had smoothed the valleys where nations should be cradled—and given direction to the course of the rivers, whose banks should become the seat of empire. The subsequent distribution of Canaan among the tribes of Israel was only the transcription of an eternal plan. "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people *according to the number of the children of Israel.*" Yes, before Moses—before Pisgah itself, from which Moses looked down on the promised land, existed—His eye had looked down from the height of His sanctuary, and had beheld prospectively that Sinai whence His law should be given—that Zion which should be crowned with His temple—that Calvary which should receive the mystery of the Cross.

Now, that the prospect of this development of His great plan afforded Him profound satisfaction is evident, not only from the Scriptures already quoted, but from the fact that He has sought at times to throw His Church into an ecstasy

of delight by affording them glimpses of its onward course. All the sublime disclosures of prophecy are merely glimpses of that future on which His eye is perpetually fixed, and by the prospect of which He would fain admit His people to a fellowship in His own delight. And all the satisfaction those disclosures have ever yielded to an Abraham, who saw his day and was glad—to a David, an Isaiah, an Ezekiel, a Paul, a John, entranced with the vision to the whole Church, which, having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and died in exulting faith—all this is only as a particle of the boundless joy which they have ever set before Him.

3. There was the happiness of prospectively beholding *the effects arising from His gratuitous interposition for human salvation. He enjoyed that.* If, owing to no defect in the original constitution of the great plan of Providence, any part of that plan be violated by man; and if, owing to no original defect in man, but owing to his abuse of his necessary free agency, that violation take place; and if, therefore, without any claim on the Divine interposition, the Mediator yet determined to remedy the evil—to take advantage of it in a way which shall accrue to the infinite good of the very beings who had introduced the evil—who can picture His satisfaction in the prospect of *such* a result? Accordingly, there is a class of Scriptures which represents Him as rejoicing in the prospect. Had sin brought the world into a crisis in which the only alternative to its destruction was an expiatory sacrifice which He alone could render? "Sacrifice and offering," said He, "sacrifice and offering such as man can provide, thou didst not desire; but a body hast thou prepared for *me*. Lo, I come to give it a sacrifice, and to do thy will, O my God." Had sin depraved the race, and reduced it to a state in which even that sacrifice by itself would be unavailing? "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," saith He; "I will give them *new* hearts and *right* spirits." Had sin converted the earth into a vast sepulchre?

"I will ransom them from the grave," said He; "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." Yes, even then, as He surveyed the waste and desolation occasioned by sin, He that sat upon the throne proclaimed, "Behold, I make all things new." And as He said this, He clearly foresaw what would be the fearful result if He were not to interpose. The satisfaction which He felt, therefore, in the contemplation of what He proposed to do, was heightened by the vivid contrast in which it stood before His view with what must be the dreadful alternative if He did not interpose. And when He anticipated the day in which He should come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe; when the grateful strain of adoring myriads came on His ear, ascribing to Him salvation, and honour, and glory, and power; when, in addition to the many crowns upon His head, He foresaw the myriads cast before His feet; when He thus saw of the travail of His soul, He was satisfied.

4. Then there was the happiness derivable from knowing that, important as the recovery of man is, *in attaining it He should be attaining an end greater still—attaining the greatest of all ends, the manifestation of the Divine glory.* Now, if this end be so great that every other stands to it only in the relation of means—if this is infinitely greater than all other ends combined, the happiness arising from the attainment of it must be infinitely greater also. The happiness flowing from the spectacle of a redeemed and happy creation must be great; for He knew, not only what would be the exact measure of its happiness at this moment, but how happy it will be ten thousand ages hence, when its capacity for happiness will have increased ten thousandfold, with all the happiness it will have enjoyed in the interval, and so on for ever. The happiness again flowing from the fact that, on account of 1. mediatorial work, He is the object of the Father's infinite delight, is greater still. For He estimates that complacency at its proper worth, which is infinite—

*absolutely infinite.* But inconceivably high as He values that complacency, more highly still does He value that glory for the manifestation of which that complacency is accorded to Him. The prospect of beholding a universe of dependent beings hanging on independent All-sufficience—every heart a channel through which a fulness of delight is constantly streaming from the great central source, and every moment enlarging to receive more—every sin forgiven, every evil remedied, every want supplied—the whole reflecting and replenished with the Divine glory—this is the consummation of that joy which is set before Him. Much as He may delight in the *favour* of Deity, He rates the *glory* of the Deity higher still; for it is *that* which gives, even to His *favour*, all its value; so that to be the means of manifesting it to the universe is the crown of His mediatorial happiness, as it is the end of creation.

## II.

Now, if from the beginning the welfare of man, in harmony with the Divine glory, has thus engaged the complacent regard of the Mediator, we may expect, *secondly, that all His communications and intercourse with us would be made to harmonize with our welfare also.* True, this expectation takes it for granted that He foresaw the apostasy and ruin of man, *otherwise* we should not have known *what* course He might have taken towards us. Great as His delight was in the contemplation of man as innocent, what the view was which He would take of us as guilty, unless He himself had informed us, no finite mind could have possibly conceived. But the prospective delight spoken of in the text *is* that which He felt in the contemplation of His intercourse with us as ruined, in order to our recovery. Relying, therefore, on His wisdom and resources, we are warranted in expecting that all His communications with us will harmonize with the wants of our nature—that the means will be adapted to the end. Accordingly, the text implies that so perfect is the adaptation

between the provisions of mercy and the necessity of man, that he who rejects them wrongs his own soul—that he who receives them receives life.

Tell us, then, we would say to an inquirer on the subject—tell us the distinguishing *wants* of human nature, and we will tell you the distinguishing excellencies of Divine revelation. Take a comprehensive survey of the human family, and say, as an ancient prophet was sometimes bidden to say, "What seest thou?" "A vast theatre, crowded with active beings." Consider them well and say, from what you behold, what would you regard as their chief characteristics? That they are intelligent, suffering, guilty, and immortal beings.

1. From their eager inquiries and their signs of reflection, you infer that they are *intelligent beings*, and from other signs you infer that the subjects which most *deeply* interest them are those which refer to their origin, their character, and their relation to the invisible and the future. Need we remind you what man's own unaided solutions of these problems are?—how puerile, how contradictory, how absurd! But come and see the Divine explanation of the mystery. Taking us back to the creation of man, it declares that he was formed for holiness and enjoyment—that as a free agent he was able to stand, yet free to fall—that his guilt and misery originated in a voluntary act of disobedience against God. And does not this account for that feeling of which you are often conscious—of a dignity departed, of a happiness blighted? does it not account for your moral conflicts and your yet lingering admiration of spiritual excellence and worth? Tearing away the veil from your breast, it declares of your conscience that it is a dethroned power, and of your heart that it is deceitful and depraved, and of your nature that it is tainted in its springs and principles; and every fibre of your system thrills to the truth of the appeal. It makes the statement *universal*—with a bold and comprehensive generality, it declares, "There is none righteous; no, not one." With the fearlessness of a wisdom which cannot err, and of a truth which cannot lie, it

affirms, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And not a single exception to the truth of the allegation has ever appeared. Taking us into the presence of God, and rolling away the clouds from before His throne, it discloses to us a being, not of natural merely, but of moral perfection—so holy, that it interprets all our fears of Him—so just, that we wonder not at our past emotions of dread—and yet so compassionate and gracious, that our utmost hopes are infinitely surpassed; while to all this it adds the information of the existence of other orders of beings and of other worlds, and tells us that it imparts the knowledge because we are, personally, deeply interested in the solemn disclosure. Yes, it has nothing for a vain curiosity—it trifles with no man—its tones are earnest as the thunder, and it goes to its object direct as the bolt of the lightning.

2. But look again on the human family, and say—What other characteristic do you regard as distinguishing them? Do you not see the streaming tears of some, and hear the groans of others, and mark the haggard looks and the bowed and wasted forms of others? and can you doubt that man *is a sufferer?* And say, before you withdraw your eyes from the moving spectacle, say—What do you see them ministering to each other's relief? Do they tell the sufferer of fixed, irrevocable fate—advise him to front with defiance the ills which he cannot escape—and, when he can bear no more, do they help him to the dagger and the poison? Do you see them at least pointing him to the grave as the end of his troubles? Miserable comforters are they all! And yet this is all that the religion of the Pantheon, the Pagoda, the Mosque, the Temple of Reason can do for him. With this, their resources of consolation are all exhausted. For sorrow, in truth, has but two places of refuge—the sanctuary and the grave. You have seen the latter—turn now to the former, and see what God provides. Would it alleviate the distress of the sufferer to know that he is not abandoned to a blind chance and a relentless destiny? The Bible draws aside the

veil which hides the spiritual world from our view; and, behold, a vast scheme of providence administered by God himself, in which every want is noticed—every object numbered—every being moving in the direct gaze of Omniscience. Would the assurance of sympathy lighten the sufferer's griefs? The Bible assures him that there is a sense in which every earthly pang vibrates to the throne of God—thrills the very heart of Divine compassion. Hence the Bible contains a promise for every pang that rends—a solace for every throb that beats in the human breast. Hence it brings the most afflicted the nearest to the throne of grace—reserves for him there the favoured place. Hence the Son of God himself became a man of sorrows, that He might be able to succour them that are tempted. Should it sustain the sufferer to know that his trials may conduce to his moral improvement here, and more still, to his blessedness hereafter? Let him know that there *are* lines of relation between every sanctified trial on earth and the highest throne in heaven. Would he see the men who once had the world against them for their attachment to Christ? He must look for them now before the throne of God. He will find them now, with a number which no man can number, clad in robes of royalty, and having palms of victory in their hands. Oh, blessed arrangement, and worthy of a God, by which our light afflictions, and but for a moment, can thus be made to work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

3. But man is not merely a rational and a suffering being. Look again on the restless crowds, and say by what other marks are they distinguished? What mean those altars, ever-streaming blood—those keen self-upbraidings—those cruel self-inflictions—that offer to sacrifice even the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul? Do they not all proclaim a deep-seated sense of *personal sinfulness*—remorse, which calls for atonement—self-dissatisfaction, which can be allayed by nothing less than a new nature? And can it be, you inquire, that the Mediator has made provision for *these* neces-

sities? Yes, come with us, and we will shew you a sight which has already moved all heaven, and which is destined to move all earth. We lead you to it through a long array of types, and emblems, and impressive rites; these are only the august preparations for the event. Behold that cross, and know that in the person of Him who there expires you see *the Mediator himself*—God manifest in the flesh. It was our only means of escape from destruction, and He voluntarily submits to it. To say that He foresaw this necessity, is only saying that He is equal to the mediatorial office. And to say that He yet undertook that office voluntarily, is only saying that He who is at the head of a system of free agency is Himself a free agent. But that He should have *done* this—that He who was co-equal with the Father should have voluntarily subordinated Himself—that He who had known no necessity but that of being, and of being what He was, should have brought Himself under obligation—that He, who had known no relation but that of the ineffable union of the Godhead, should bind Himself to sustain relations infinitely inferior—that He should in any sense have so come forth from the Godhead as to enter into relations with the creatures, and to bind Himself to do everything necessary for their welfare—that He, the beginning of creation, should range Himself in a line with His own creatures, subjecting Himself to His own laws—and doing this for the express purpose of dying—dying as an expiation for human guilt—dying that justice might have a compensation to accept, and that mercy might have forgiveness to bestow—these are wonders resolvable only into the depths of infinite compassion for us, and infinite regard for the Divine glory. This was the joy which from eternity was set before Him; and hence you see Him enduring the cross, and despising the shame.

Nor is this all; the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, while providing a complete satisfaction for human guilt, provides that which you equally require—means for the renovation of your

sinful nature, and motives to a constant progress in holiness. You cannot look upon the cross of Christ, cannot enter into its mediatorial design, without feeling that a virtue comes out of it, that the Spirit is honouring and employing it as the means of your renovation. Yes, so wonderfully adapted to the susceptibilities, so exquisitely adjusted to all the springs of our nature is the cross of Christ, that, in the hand of the Spirit, it relieves our apprehensions, while it quickens our sensibility—gives peace to the conscience, while it increases its activity and power—inspires hope, while it produces humility, by the very magnitude and splendour of the objects which inspire it—demands perfection, by presenting the affections with an object calculated to produce it.

4. But man is not merely a rational, suffering, sinful being. Cast another glance at the heaving and restless mass of humanity, and you will find that it is groaning and travailing together in pain, casting anxious looks on the future, gazing on the distant darkness, invoking the dead, and that the burden of its great anxiety is this—"If a man die, *shall he live again?*" We will not ask you to remember the vague and contradictory replies which this question has received from human hopes and fears. We will take you at once to Him who is the "Resurrection and the Life." Do you see that form of majesty standing at the mouth of the sepulchre, radiant with immortality? That is He who was dead and is alive again, and who liveth for evermore, and hath the keys of death and of the invisible world. Do you mark that vision of dissolving elements, of the rising dead, of the great white throne, of the opened books, and of the assembled universe? It is the representation of the final day, when you and all your race will receive your eternal allotments, according to the deeds done in the body. Do you feel a capacity for ever-advancing excellence, a longing for ever-increasing happiness? The heaven of the Bible is eternally set apart for both. There, nothing that defileth can enter. There, excellence will know no pause in its progress from throne to throne, happiness no

interruption to its ever-widening deepening stream. Thus the Gospel hath brought life and immortality to light—brought them from an unknown distance, and placed them before us—brought heaven, with all its glories, into *our* horizon—brought the very throne of judgment so near to us, that whenever we will we can place ourselves before it—surrounded us with the solemn pomp and the spiritual inhabitants of the unseen world—so surrounded us that they look down on us, press in on us—that, do what we will, we feel that we are moving under the powers of the world to come.

Now, such are parts of that great system of saving truth by which the Saviour seeks to realize those purposes of mercy towards us, the bare contemplation of which filled Him with delight. So perfect is their adaptation in this respect, that no one present can reject them without *wronging his own soul.* Yes, his *soul;* his health may not suffer in consequence, his worldly prosperity may not decline—but his soul, the noblest part of his nature, is wronged. This whole system of truth was meant for *it,* expressly constructed for his soul, and his soul constructed for it—they were designed for each other, so that, as long as he stands aloof from it, he is wronging his own soul. Here is the rich inheritance—his soul is the only part of him capable of enjoying it, and he is wronging the immortal heir of its immortal inheritance. And dying thus, the wrong will be irretrievable, eternal. He will ever carry about with him a wronged soul; for he will for ever carry about in his soul some faculties unused, capacities unfilled, powers undeveloped; for of the only thing which could have developed and filled them, he wronged it. The full extent of the wrong he will never know. Though his sense of the wrong will be perpetually increasing, ten thousand ages will have only partially revealed to him its untold extent.

But then, in proportion to that loss if he neglect it, is his gain if he find it—*he finds life.* Not merely existence, but all that can enrich, expand, and make it infinitely

desirable—motives for all its actions, and objects for its noblest affections. Not merely deliverance from *death*, but its very opposite—*the favour of the Lord.* Finds himself standing in the light of that favour—sharing it with the cherubim—sharing it with Christ himself. Finds a world in which to enjoy it: this world is too confined for it: it asks the scope of infinity for its expansion. And after the lapse of ten thousand ages, he will feel as if he were only just commencing its enjoyment;—it is the very crown of life.

Now, it was the perception of this happy result which engaged the complacent regards of the Saviour from eternity. He could not think of the human soul as defrauded of happiness, and toiling for ever in its guilt, without compassion. And when He saw how perfectly adapted the whole system of mediation was to meet the exigence—how, in effect, it would give back God to the soul, and the soul to God; and when He thought of Himself as the medium for effecting this end—of all the happiness it would bring to man, and all the glory it would cause to redound to God—His complacency rose to infinite delight.

## III.

Then, thirdly, if from the beginning the Saviour has rejoiced in the habitable part of the earth, and if He has thus graciously adapted all his communications to its welfare, may we not infer, must we not expect, that even of this habitable part He would rejoice in some spots more than in others, especially in such *as are set apart for the diffusion of His truth and the promotion of His designs?* Under the former economy, He commanded the erection of such a place, superintended everything belonging to it, engaged that His eye and His heart should be there perpetually, designated it His own house, distinguished it with His richest blessing. In the text we find Him inviting men to repair to it, and pronouncing a blessing on the man who was found "watching at his gates, waiting at the posts of his doors." And

the reason is obvious; for, having an end to accomplish, He values everything according to its tendency to promote that end. And if He rejoices in the habitable part of the earth, simply because it is to be the *scene* where that end is to be attained, much more will He rejoice in any spot of its inhabited regions actually *devoted to that end—made sacred to its attainment.*

For, think of the special relation which such a place bears to those gracious communications and purposes of which we have been speaking. Those of you who are at all acquainted with the constitution of the human mind need not be informed that it is constructed to receive impressions from everything around us—that the value of visible and sensible objects consists chiefly in serving as memorials and emblems of the spiritual and invisible—and that all our deepest and noblest impressions should be received from these. Man was to have moved over the face of the earth as amidst the types and symbolic services of a temple, where everything was adapted to remind him of God. His every step was to bring him into the presence of some new object, from which he should receive some fresh impression, reminding him of God. But you need not be told that sin has disturbed this adjustment, and thrown it into confusion. The temple remains, but man is no longer a worshipper. The objects remain, but not now as types and symbols, but as realities and idols. The mind within him retains its susceptibility of impression, but the impression no longer leads it up in humble adoration to God. For him, that glorious Being, and the heaven He inhabits, and all the realities of the invisible world have, in effect, ceased to exist. He seldom visits them even in thought. The vast circumference which he was meant to range through at will has drawn in around him, like the shades of the evening, into a narrower and yet narrower circle, until he lives in a horizon which can be measured—spanned. And, then, think of the few objects of sense which this circle includes. By

being constantly present to his *view*, they are constantly present to his *mind*, influencing, tyrannizing over him, engrossing him all to themselves.

Now, do you not see that if this state of things is to be remedied, some counter-force, some antagonist principle must be employed to make him aware of his condition? Do you not see that if this visible world is not to engross him entirely to itself, the invisible must either open a communication with him, which shall acquaint him with *its* existence and *its* claims upon him, or else, throwing off its invisible character, and coming down from its unknown remoteness, must burst upon him, and stand forth to his view an infinite and an ever-present reality? Now, He who has undertaken our salvation has done this; and the outline of truth which we just now gave is a part of the grand result.

But how is the proper effect of this Divine communication to be secured? True, God may have spoken, may be still speaking to us; but a thousand other voices are addressing us also. How shall He obtain a hearing? True, the invisible may have made itself visible, but then it is only one visible object among many. How shall it rivet attention? Can no place be set apart, no portion of time be secured for this special purpose? Can no circle be drawn, however small, within the hallowed circumference of which man might escape for a while from the objects of earth, and surrender himself entirely to the influences of heaven? Now, do you not know that God has graciously answered this inquiry? that besides other means, social and private, he has actually made this provision, by the institution of the Sabbath and the appointment of public worship? Wise and gracious appointment! Oh, with what sacredness of character does it invest the sanctuary! Here heaven takes refuge from earth, that it may afterwards go forth and take *possession* of earth. Here wisdom makes her home, not to keep religion from the world, but to keep the world from defeating religion. Here wisdom stands and cries, "O ye children, hear instruc-

tion, and be wise; blessed is the man that heareth me:" not that she refuses to go to *his* home; but, *with a view to that,* she invites him to her *own* home. Her subject demands a patient, prayerful hearing; and she prepares a sanctuary expressly for the purpose. In the world, if you *are* ever visited by thoughts and vague imaginings which relate to the soul and eternity, surrounding objects speedily melt and scatter them into thin air; but here you come to have your hopes explained, your fears interpreted, your impressions deepened, your vague conceptions turned into definite realities. There, you witness crime and suffering, and sometimes shrink at them, and pronounce them unparalleled; here, you are to see the gulf of perdition yawn, and the unquenchable flames break forth at your feet, and to hear the cries of those whose torments *are unparalleled,* and to be reminded that you yourself are in danger of *these.* There, you may hear of kindness, and sometimes experience it, and perhaps feel at a loss how adequately to acknowledge it, as if, forsooth, you knew of none greater; but here, you are to be told of a love so great that all the kindness of earth is only a type of it, and all your capacity for gratitude only intended to help you to apprehend it, to enable you by sympathy to get just a glimpse of it. There, you mingle with those who think and who live only for the present, and you are in danger of living like them; here, the past and the future meet you, the distant draws near, the infinitely High comes down—all the influences of the invisible world collect, and descend, and settle round you. Yes, here you "come unto Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem," for this is none other than the house of God, the gate of heaven. Here you "come to an innumerable company of angels." Do you not know that they are impatient to rejoice over your repentance? You approach "the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven." Should you not feel the unearthly grandeur of the distinction? should it not eclipse the little tinsel dignities of the world without?

You draw near to "God the judge of all." Will you not plead guilty before Him, and deprecate His displeasure? And rejoice to find that here too you "come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant." Will you not approach and entreat Him to mediate for *you?* He expects it—He is here expressly to espouse your cause. And do you not see the argument which He is prepared to plead in your behalf—nay, which pleads itself,—"The blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel," which anticipates *your* speaking, which speaks for you before you speak for yourself, and on account of which alone you can be heard?

Oh, with what sacredness of character is the sanctuary invested! You come here to be treated as *rational, suffering, sinful,* and *immortal* beings—beings whose happiness was contemplated and provided for before the foundations of the world—yea, even before the first creative fiat was issued—before the material of which this fabric is built had come into existence. The geologist would take you down to the foundations of the earth, and tell you, as you stood on the primeval granite, that you were standing on a monument of incalculable, dateless antiquity. But the Bible refers you to a period more ancient still—announces that when as yet the earth was not made, before the mountains were settled or the hills brought forth, your welfare had occupied the Eternal Mind—that when He gave to the sea His decree, and appointed the foundations of the earth, that *then* He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth—that if He formed the uninhabitable, it was for the sake of the inhabitable—the physical for the rational—the material for the spiritual. So that even the material of which your sanctuary is built, dateless as its antiquity may be, may be regarded as having been brought into being for its present purpose—as now contributing to a purpose more ancient than its own existence. An end, indeed, it has always been answering—as a part of the material globe, it has always been contributing by the

law of attraction to link our earth to all the worlds that move in space. But now, without ceasing to assist to link one *material* globe to another, by being built into a house for God, it is indirectly to assist in linking *earth to heaven.* Did He rejoice prospectively in the habitable parts of the earth — the parts which *men* should inhabit — how much more would He rejoice in the parts which *He himself should inhabit!* the places which they would build that He, "the Lord God, might dwell among them!"

Oh, when you have looked at times on a map of the globe, and your eye has glanced awhile from pole to pole, have you ever failed to turn with interest to your own, your native land? And if, besides your country, you could recognize the city or the town where you dwelt, was not your interest deepened? But if, in addition to that, the very spot of your residence could have been denoted, that would have rendered your interest deeper still. Brethren, a map there is which from eternity has been ever extended before the eye of God. In that map of the universe, the orbit of every star, the path of every planet, and, therefore, of our earth, is traced; and as often as His eye rested on the habitable parts, so often did He rejoice with an infinite joy. Could you be allowed at this moment to look on it, and to have your eye directed towards the spot where we now stand—think you that you would have to look for it in vain? What! *man's* habitations denoted, and *His own house* omitted! Rather should the most renowned cities of earth be omitted. Yes, rather than the humblest spot where prayer is wont to be made should be left out, all the palaces, and halls, and gilded domes of earth should be for ever omitted. But no, you would not look for it in vain. You would find it denoted by a point of light—you would see it marked by a ray of glory. And as you remember that *there* it had stood to His foreseeing eye from eternity—and as you glanced from it to behold the light of His countenance, and saw that His eye was fixed and resting complacently on it—would you not feel that it was invested

with an infinite sacredness and importance? Brethren, more than this is true. He does not confine Himself to looking on—He cannot content Himself with looking down upon you from an unknown height, however complacently; nor could you be content that He should. Have you not invited—*invoked* His presence? Has He not often descended; is He not now present—present to record His name here—present to lay His commands on you afresh, and to repeat His promises, as if He were now uttering them for the first time? To the Church He is saying, "As often as you meet here in my name, I will be in the midst of you." And to the minister He is saying, "Feed the Church which I have purchased with my own blood; and as to the unconverted, beseech them, in my stead, to be reconciled to God." And concerning the young, He is saying to minister and people, "Here bring them to me, that I may bless them. Here let me see of the travail of my soul and be satisfied. From eternity I have rejoiced in the prospect of what I now behold, for I have ever beheld it in its relation to my purposes of mercy; and now mine eye is fixed on its distant issue in the eternity to come. Here let my gospel be faithfully proclaimed, and practically exemplified; and my joy shall be perpetuated and augmented for ever."

## IV.

Then, fourthly, let this remind us of *what He may be supposed to expect* from a place thus distinguished. Of course when we speak of the *place* in such a connexion, we can only intend the people who meet in it. *For* them it exists; and *to* them all the purposes of mercy with which its walls may echo have been addressed.

1st, He expects you to *sympathize with Him in his regard for human happiness.* If He has taken you into His counsels, and shewn you that from eternity He has delighted in the sons of men, it is in order to inspire you with the same emotions. If He has shewn you the studied adaptation

of His Gospel to the wants of intelligent, suffering, sinful, immortal man—it is that you may look abroad on your perishing race with a yearning desire to apply the remedy. If He has called you to a participation of His grace—it is that you, in employing His Gospel as the instrument of human salvation, may act with confidence in its sufficiency—it is that, constrained by His love, there may be no limits set to your efforts for His glory. If He has shewn you how He from eternity has devoted His vast resources to the welfare of man—it is that you, if possible, may be shamed out of the idea of devoting less than *your all* to the same object. We are called to be the *representatives* of His grace to the world; and are our powers *so* capacious, our natures *so* exalted, that less than the consecration of the whole should be able to convey an idea of His grace? Oh, if He has organized his people into a Church—it is partly because *no individual* Christian, whatever his devotedness may be; no single *separate society of Christians,* though each member were a Paul, an Apollos, or a Cephas; *nothing* less than the *whole body of Christians,* strengthened by union, fired with mutual emulation, with their energies compacted and concentrated into the force of a single power—can ever represent the unity of His design for human salvation, and the entireness of His devotion to its accomplishment. To save the world was His *vocation,* His *supreme and single object;* so that, in order to represent Him, His people must make it their one *business* and *calling* to carry out His gracious design.

2dly, He expects you then *to aim at results, and to look for them.* It is the prospect of these which has ever filled Him with delight. Think you that He would have rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth—that He himself would have visited the earth—would have become the Son of man—would have said, in reference to His sacrificial death, "How am I straitened until it be accomplished!"—unless He could have confidently calculated on adequate *results?* And you know what these are—the manifestation of the

Divine glory in human salvation. Some of these results He is looking for here; and He requires that you should aim at them, and expect them. Expect them—and it will impart a unity, a sanctity, and a power to all your religious endeavours. Expect Divine success—and so far from being surprised, as many a Church would be by its coming, you will be restless and dissatisfied unless and until it does come. Expect it—and you will pray for it. The reason why conversions are not prayed for, or, if prayed for, why so many Christians are content that their prayers should not be answered is, that they do not *expect* the blessing; they have, in a sense, outlived the expectation. But expect it—and not only will it give a directness to your appeals, and a holy energy to your efforts—not only will it keep alive your tenderest sympathies for the unconverted—it will often take you to the throne of grace; for you will feel your entire dependence on the Spirit of God, and there will you wrestle with Him for the success you desire. Expect it—the Saviour will—He will continue to come here, seeking fruit—the precious, precious fruit of His sufferings and death. And shall He be disappointed? Nothing less than souls converted, sinners saved, will satisfy Him; nothing less than this will satisfy those of His people even who know you, and take an interest in your welfare—and shall less satisfy you? But this supposes the activity of all—their *personal* activity; not their wishes merely, nor even their property. The same Being who tells us, in one part of the text, that He had taken prospective delight in the children of men, so far from confining Himself to an *inactive* survey, is next heard inviting the world to assemble around Him for instruction—sending out His messengers, and, with a sacred violence, compelling men to come in. And shall not His people imitate His example?

4th, Finally—*anticipate consequences.* Not only expect the results of which we have spoken, *but anticipate the consequences of those results.* These I would fain leave to your own private reflections. And could I only insure that you

would, on retiring, ponder them awhile, and then give utterance in prayer to the emotions they would inspire, I should thank God for the effect produced. I will only remind you that the consequences of which I speak will reach through eternity; that, as the eye of Christ has, through all the past, been fixed on the present, so now from the present, as from the summit of a moral elevation, it is taking a survey of all the eternal consequences. And does the sight delight Him? The messages that will continue to be here delivered—the prayers that will be offered—the liberality and zeal which will still be manifested—the souls that will be converted—the summing up of the whole in the last great day—and then the consequences through all the everlasting future—He foresees the whole; and, as He looks on it, *is* He satisfied?

No! "*The end* is not yet!"—not even the end of the services which are past. They are to shed an influence on all the future; they are to mingle as a moral element in all your future history; they are to reproduce themselves over and over again; they will reappear in other services of the sanctuary—in many a season of reflection—in many a dying hour—in the final day; yes, they will reappear in heaven or in hell; in the one, in the hoarse and aggravated accents of self-reproach—in the other, in the songs of the harpers, harping with their harps. In this sense, your services here will open an eternity. Brethren, your sanctuary opens out on eternity. Like a house fronting the boundless sea, this house stands fronting eternity—looks out on the infinite future. Of every seed which is here sown the produce will have to be reaped in eternity. And on that produce it is that the eye of Christ is at this moment fixed. Oh, could we mark His looks as He regards it! Saviour, art thou satisfied? Why gathers that expression of ineffable concern in Thy gracious looks? What hearest Thou—what seest Thou in that distant future? The souls of some here—lost? Lost! But is their loss inevitable? Canst Thou not dictate some message which shall arrest them? Will prayer avail? Will tears—

will efforts avail? And why does Thy countenance brighten again? Dost Thou see the brands plucked out of the burning? And by our instrumentality? And art Thou satisfied? In Thy satisfaction shall we find our heaven.

Brethren, farewell. Act on the firm conviction, that every prayer you offer—every gift you present—every effort you make for His glory, will heighten His Divine delight—will brighten those eternal consequences of which we have spoken—will enhance your own delight for ever. Act on the conviction now; and may God give His blessing. Amen.

# SERMON VI.

## THE SECOND ADAM THE LORD FROM HEAVEN.

1 Cor. xv. 45-47—"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam a life-giving Spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven."

Two men have trod the earth—two real historical men. Before the first of them died, his posterity had multiplied to thousands—myriads; but what are they all to us compared to that "*first man?*" Since then, millions have succeeded in every age; but what are they all to us compared to that "*second man?*" The first man himself is as nothing compared with the second—acquires all his real importance from his relation to the second. I look at the first, and I see him *made* a living soul. I look at the second, and I behold Him *making, creating*, as a life-imparting Spirit. I look at the first, and I see everything around him withering, dying—all his posterity falling into the dust. I look at the second, and behold, He is standing at the great grave of humanity, and the dead are starting into life around Him. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven."

### I.

Now, in enlarging on the peculiar view which is here presented of our Lord as "*the second man, from heaven,*" it is proper to advert, first, to His relations to the first man, or

to the necessity which arose for His coming. And here I need not remind you at any length of the importance attached by the Almighty to the introduction upon the earth of the first man. Imagine an analogous case; imagine that one of the planets on which, in the stillness of evening, your eye has often rested, and which, for untold ages, has been pursuing its silent course in the heavens, was about to become, for the first time, the habitation, not of beings from other worlds, but of a new race of intelligent beings—creatures of a kind hitherto unknown to the universe of God; that they were to go on multiplying for ages; that, as their history advanced, it would be marked by unheard-of events—would be the means of developing new principles of the Divine government, new aspects of the Divine character; and that the first of the race about to be created would sustain, in some way, a relation to all that should follow, which should shed a peculiar influence on the whole through all duration: conceive of such a case, and you can easily imagine that it would be an event calculated to draw to itself the interest and to rivet on it the attention of the universe.

Now, such was actually the interest—however unexciting the subject may have become to us through familiarity—such was the interest which attached to the introduction of the first man upon the earth. There never had been a moment in the past eternity when his coming was not present to the mind of God. His constitution was to be a novelty in creation, for it was to combine in one the laws of matter and of mind—it was to be a spirit incarnate; and there never was a moment when that constitution was not designed and present to the mind of God. "In thy book all his members were written, when as yet there was none of them." And if the outlines of man's *physical* structure were thus sketched and laid down, how much more may we suppose the capacities and powers of the indwelling soul to have been present to the creating Mind!

Hence, too, the earth had all along been building and

preparing by God, with a view to the coming of man. Man was not made for the world; the world, from the first, had been made for man. From the time when the foundations of the earth were laid, the Great Builder had never lost sight of the designed constitution of the human inhabitant. For him the Creator had "weighed the very mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." It was to be the place for the *education* of his new made mind; and hence all its objects were formed, and placed, and numbered, to arrest his eye and engage his attention. His discovery of its natural laws was to constitute much of his science; his application of these laws was to be his art and occupation. It was to be his *temple* for worship. Wherever he looked he was to find himself surrounded by the symbols of the Godhead. Every object on which his eye could rest was to be either an altar of memorial or an offering to be laid on it. Nay, the earth itself, as it went speeding through space, what was it to be but an altar at which he was to be perpetually ministering? In *prospect* of the event, one can almost hear the sons of God, as they press towards Eden, shouting for joy, for the Triune God has at length said, "Let us make man in our own image." And when he *was* made, one can almost conceive that he sees them joining the new made man in his first act of homage, mingling their worship with his, already aiding him as "ministering spirits," rejoicing in the anticipation that henceforth God will be served on earth as in heaven.

But besides being a *school* for his education, and a *temple* for his worship, earth is to be the scene of man's *probation*. It could not be otherwise. By his very constitution he is a subject of moral government, and therefore everything voluntary he may do will inevitably be right or wrong. In a sense earth was planted over with trees of the knowledge of good and evil. "Thou shalt," or "thou shalt not," was inscribed on everything. Man's happiness was made to depend on his obedience. It could not be otherwise. For, as a moral being, he is a law unto himself. His nature is a system of

laws; and sin is the violation of them all. So that, even if God were not to interfere, sin would, notwithstanding, prove to be destruction. From the moment of his creation, the first man enclosed within himself, so to speak, a whole system of moral government—laws, and judge, and prison, and instruments of torture, if he disobeyed; rewards, and happiness, and conscious improvement, if he obeyed. One of the benevolent designs of the first command was to teach him this; to make him aware what a nature he possessed; to impress him with the great truth that, in a lofty sense, he was given into his own hands; that sin would be followed by toil, and suffering, and death; that obedience would be crowned by rewards, converting earth into heaven. And still more, of that probation, if successful, his posterity are to reap the advantage. He the model of holy obedience; they copying his bright example. He invested with the lordship of the world; and they sharing the inheritance with him. He their head and representative with God; and they glorifying God in him. How magnificent the prospect! How glorious the possibility!

But what if the new-made man should abuse his freedom? What if the *possibility* of his sinning should become a fearful *reality?* Who can foresee the tremendous consequences? Brethren, *you know* the dreadful result. The hour of trial came, and he fell. A law was given him; and, oh, better had a star fallen from its sphere, and been falling still! he broke away from the sacred restraints of that law—deranged the harmony of his own nature—disturbed the tranquillity of the universe—incurred the penalty of transgression. Attempt not to extenuate his guilt. You admit that evil must result from the infraction of a natural law; and is *moral* law less important? You admit that the least deviation of the earth from its orbit would be followed by physical disorder and ruin to an unknown extent. But here is a being, into whose hand the earth itself has been given, outraging *moral* law, bringing himself into actual collision with the great Law-giver.

What but retribution *can* ensue? To rectify the evil himself, is an absolute impossibility. Even perfect obedience for the future, were that within his power, would not avail; for that would have been due independently of his sin. And what if the evil should go on diffusing itself through his nature till it has taken possession of the whole, and has reduced him to "a body of sin and death"? And what if the same polluting leaven should leaven the whole mass of humanity, which is to descend from him? What if its hand should come daily to pluck forbidden fruit, and its tongue to utter deceit, and its feet be swift to shed blood, and all its members become instruments of unrighteousness unto sin? What if it should complete its degradation and its guilt by calling the worship of its own vices, religion—the thraldom of Satan, liberty? All this, remember, was involved in the tendency of the first sin, and was all present to the mind of God. What! and shall man succeed in unmaking himself? Shall it never be known how holy and excellent he could have become? Shall man never see his own nature in perfection; never see the *Divine* as it was meant to shine forth in the *human?* Shall God never again behold His own image in man; never be honoured in His human workmanship? One thing is certain, that if ever the ideal of humanity *is* to be realized, there must be a *second man.* One thing is clear, that the first man can never be a fair exemplar to his posterity of what humanity should be; and that if it be important for them to have before their eyes a perfect model, there must be a second man. The first man has lost the lordship of the world; and if it ever be recovered for his descendants, it can only be by a second man. By "one man sin hath entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death will pass upon all men, for that all will sin;" and if ever that sin be expiated, and that death abolished, and man is to have an adequate representative and head, it can only be by the coming of a second man! And from the hour in which *His* coming was first promised, everything

was kept in suspense, and waited for him, or proclaimed aloud the necessity of His advent.

## II.

Let us observe, secondly, how remarkably everything supposed His coming, or prepared for it. We have seen that, before the creation of the first man, everything looked forwards to Him. All *nature* was preconfigured to Him. All its laws were mute predictions of what He would be, physically and mentally, at least, if not morally. A being of lofty intelligence could have foretold much respecting man's constitution, from the very structure of the earth which was preparing for him. It was a kind of cypher in the handwriting of God, of which the human being was to be the key and interpreter. But from the moment in which man fell from his high estate, everything began to presignify the coming of the second man. Turning from the first man, everything rose in importance and acquired a new value, by pointing to the second. From that hour, the first man himself fell into the processional train of objects and events which preceded and heralded the second; he became, says the Apostle, "the figure of *Him that was to come.*" The *promise* that the second head of the human race should, in some peculiar sense, be *woman-born*—what did it intimate but that were it not for his destined birth, no human beings should be ever born? that but for the fact that "a body was to be prepared for him," the multiplication of the species was already at an end? The *promise of His coming* decided henceforth the character and destiny of man; divided the race into two classes—those who believed His coming, and those who believed it not. The *law* of His coming took precedence of every other; held on its sovereign way through the Semitic division of the human race, the Abrahamic branch of that division, the tribe of Judah in that branch, the family of David in that tribe. It was when the great fact was disclosed to David, of *His* being a progenitor of the second

Adam—when the grand truth flashed full on his astonished mind—that he uttered that wondering exclamation (the force of which our translation destroys), "What am I, O Lord Jehovah, and what my house, that thou hast brought me to this exaltation. . . . This is the law of the Adam, O Lord Jehovah!" Or, as it is given in the first book of the Chronicles, "Thou has regarded me according to the order of the Adam from above, O Jehovah God!" To this adoring language it is that the Apostle alludes in our text. For, says another of the Apostles, "David, being a prophet, knew that God had sworn with an *oath* to him, that of the fruit of his loins He would raise up the Messiah to sit upon his throne." The *oath* of His coming was the only oath which proceeded directly from the mouth of God; nothing else was of sufficient importance to deserve the solemnity; and the fulfilment of this oath included the fulfilment of every other engagement, and secured it. The *prediction* of His coming was the great text of all prophecy. It was the subject which first opened the lips of prophecy. It was placed in the front, or laid at the basis, both of the patriarchal and the Jewish dispensations. The theocracy existed for it. Its utterance mingled with the solemnities of death-bed benedictions. The darkness of Sinai was irradiated by it. The hallowed grandeur of the first temple invested it. Its fulfilment was to impart a surpassing glory to the second temple. Were the reigns of David and Solomon of unusual splendour? that splendour was wreathed by the hand of prophecy into a halo for the diadem of Messiah. Is one prophet called to survey a wide field of broken thrones and of powers overturned? it is that he may direct attention to "the desire of all nations," emerging amidst the ruins. Does another behold, in vision, the great monarchies of the earth succeeding each other? it is that he may fix all eyes on a King and a kingdom destined to absorb all power and glory—one "like the Son of man" coming and receiving universal and lasting dominion. Whatever the national calamity might be, a reference to *His*

coming brought every harp from the willow, and converted a national lament into a national hosanna. Whatever the immediate subject of a prophecy might be, no transition, however sudden, was deemed abrupt or unintelligible which introduced him. Like the Alps or the Andes, seen from every part of a vast continent, this subject towered above every other, and was seen from every part of the wide field of prophetic vision. "To Him gave all the prophets witness." From the shadowy outline sketched of Him in the first promise, the hand of prophecy had never ceased adding feature after feature, till now the grand portraiture was complete—the likeness of the Son of man—the second man. The consummation of all the great designs and promises of God was referred to the time of His coming; and his familiar designation came to be, "the Comer," "Him that is to come," as if the coming of everything else—the coming of futurity itself—depended on *His* coming.

Still more; from the *history and condition of the world*, the constitution and offices of "the second man" might have been inferred. Before the coming of the first man, everything looked forwards to him. From the time of the Fall everything symbolized and supposed the coming of the second man. Everything assumed a position pointing, preconfigured to him. The first sinner himself—I hear him convicted and denounced; why is he not destroyed? why kept in being? Another Adam is coming to expiate his guilt, and remedy the evil. His sinful posterity—I see them rapidly increase in numbers, but more rapidly in guilt; why, when punishment overtakes them, is it always arrested in its course, always partial in its infliction? A second man is on the way to endure and to exhaust it for them. Sinai is kindled and the law proclaimed; but why this, when man has made himself notorious chiefly as its transgressor? Another is expected to fulfil it. I pass into the land of Canaan, and find it cleared of its ancient heathenism, and planted over with types and symbols; who is to be the anti-

type of all these figures, the substance of all these shadows? I pass into the temple, but everything I see is pointing to the future; here is an altar, but where is the sacrifice? for "the blood of bulls and of goats cannot take away sin;" here is a sanctuary, but the entrance is closed, the veil is down; and worshippers, but they are all in the posture of unsatisfied expectation. And here, on Zion, is an empty throne. Everything appears unfinished and waiting. Everything intimates that if those sacrifices are to end in a real atonement; if that veil is to be rent; those worshippers to be satisfied; that throne to have a rightful occupant, there must be a second man, *from heaven;* and hence religion itself consisted in hoping for Him. Every office, whether of prophet, priest, or king, owed its existence and importance to Him; was hollow, and empty, and destitute of value, except in proportion as it referred to Him. Every king was a usurper, a rebel, but as he held authority for Him; every priest an idolater, but as his office typified Him; every prophet an impostor, but as he predicted Him.

The moral condition of the world involuntarily cried out for Him. Civilization, indeed, might go on assuming new forms, and developing new powers, but all tended to plunge man deeper in evil, except as it referred to *His* coming and kingdom. Apart from Him, all its pretended pleasures were but mitigations and concealments of its misery; all its treasures, but a thin veil cast over its real poverty; all its religious inventions, but substitutes for Him, or confessions of its ignorance respecting Him; all its sufferings, but instalments of its future doom, if not rescued by Him.

He himself is represented as prophetically anticipating the duties and offices which the wants of the world would require from Him. Thus, as sin had brought the world to an hour, in which the only alternative to its destruction was a sacrifice which He alone could render, "Lo, I come," said He, "a body hast thou prepared me; lo, I come to give it as a sacrifice, and to do thy will, O my God!" Had sin so

depraved the race, that even that sacrifice by itself would be unavailing? "I will pour out my Spirit," saith He, "I will give them new hearts and right spirits." Sin was rapidly converting the earth into a vast sepulchre; "but I will ransom them from the grave," said He; "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction!" And all things waited, and travailed in birth for His coming.

## III.

Then, thirdly, let us mark the *conditions* which devolved on Him, and which He fulfilled as the second man, when He did come. Great—as we have seen—great were the preparations made for the coming of the first man; and vast was the importance attached to it by God. But far loftier is the interest which invests the coming of the second. The world has been spared on the ground of it. Judea has been set apart as the theatre of the great event. The angels of God hold themselves in readiness to behold it. Unnumbered eyes are watching for His coming; unnumbered interests depending on it.

1. And "when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." This was the first condition fulfilled. He assumed the very nature of the first man—of the fallen head of the human race. Though "He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he was yet found *in fashion as a man.*" "He came *in the flesh.*" "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us." By an amazing act of self-reduction, he became *the Son of man—the second man.*

2. But if He assume the nature of man, it devolves on Him to conform to all the laws, physical and moral, which are binding on man. He fulfilled this condition. He asked for no new laws, no exemption from, no relaxation of existing laws. He deprecated the idea that he had "come to destroy the law;" declared that he had come to fulfil it; put a spiritual interpretation on it; enlarged its jurisdiction; set

Himself apart to magnify it; placed all His powers at its disposal. Think, what He found mankind generally doing with those powers, and how He shewed what might be done with them; what compassion might beam from those eyes, what grace might flow from those lips, what blessings might fall from those hands; and how He thus convicted the first man, and all his sinful posterity, and vindicated the Maker of the human frame!

3. But not only must He obey; His obedience must be a *trial*, a *probation*. He fulfilled this condition. "He suffered being tempted." "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." But did not His Divinity protect His humanity?—protect it in the sense of making it physically and absolutely impossible that He should fall into sin? Unquestionably not. To say that His human nature was originally sinless, negatively holy, is only saying that, in this respect, He was placed on a level with the first man. But, as to its union with the Divine nature, that was of a kind to leave it human still—its free agency unimpaired, all its original properties untouched, its conditions entire. That this is a great mystery, is admitted. But the mystery begins in your own nature, in that wonderful union of body with spirit, which leaves the material part under all the laws of matter, and yet brings it under additional spiritual laws. Till you can clearly explain this enigma of your own nature, start not at the greater mystery of His person. Expect, rather, that in Him the mystery would be increased, just in proportion to the superior dignity of His relations, and the greatness of His office.

That His humanity *was* left open to trial and assault, is a truth, not of reason, nor even of revelation merely; it is a matter of fact—a case of evidence. To question it, is to question whether He was left capable of suffering or not—*He*, "the man of sorrows, and familiar with grief." From the hour of His entrance on His public work, He was in constant collision with the great enemy. Temptation, so far

from retiring from His path, crowded into it all its snares and toils. His coming appears to have awakened all the original antipathy of evil against good. His whole life was a continued conflict, hourly increasing in ardour and danger, till it reached the crisis of Calvary. But "though he was tempted in all points like as we are, and inconceivably more, yet without sin"—"the prince of this world, the powers of darkness came, and had nothing in him." One moment there was, indeed, and only one, when His humanity shuddered, and seemed about to pause. One moment in which a deep, dark shadow passed over His soul, and seemed about to settle—but only seemed. It was a self-struggle; a struggle which shewed the agony of the trial, and enhanced the value of His self-sacrifice.

4. But another condition remains: if the sinful posterity of the first man have been spared on account of the second, He must render compensation to the violated law in His own person, and as their substitute. And this He did, intelligently, voluntarily, and with a devotedness the most entire. It was *the* purpose which had always filled His heart. Never, for a moment, did He withdraw His eye from the place of sacrifice; never diverged a single step from the path which led to it. So fully was He possessed with the vastness of His sacrificial design, that He valued moments, faculties, life itself, only as the means of working it out. He set himself apart to it. "I am come," said he, as He cast an eye over the vast region of spiritual death—"I am come that they might have life." He found Himself surrounded by a world of imprisoned beings, chained and laden powers, wrestling with a bondage which they themselves had imposed, yearning after a freedom they could not achieve. "The Son of man," said He, "hath come to give his life a *ransom* for many." Looking back to the dreary hour when sin entered into the world, He saw that "death had reigned from Adam"—had led down generation after generation to the dust. "But the hour is coming," said He, with holy impatience; "the hour

*is* coming, when all that are in their graves shall come forth," —"they *shall* hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth." And as He thought of the outraged law He was to vindicate; and as the groans of humanity reached His ear, and the glory which would accrue to God rose on His view, He advanced yet nearer to the altar of sacrifice. And as the hour of atonement approached, the Great Victim consecrates himself anew, and exclaims, "I have a baptism to be baptized with—a baptism of blood—and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" And as He at length stands in the awful shadow of the cross, and surveys afresh the magnitude of His undertaking, "Now," saith He, "is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour." But see, the worst is not yet. The dregged and bitter cup is put into His hand. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" That is the very sting of the penalty He has come to exhaust. Can He *endure* it? But while we ask, He is heard uttering, "It is finished," and surrenders His life.

Brethren, in that event an eternal purpose was fulfilled, and the whole of God's preceptive law was vindicated, satisfied, enthroned in the eyes of the universe. Considering the dignity of the Being who suffered, had He only signified His willingness to atone—yes, had He never actually come into our world—had He but verbally signified His readiness to come, should His coming be necessary—even that would have reflected greater honour on the law, which He was thus ready to vindicate, than it could ever receive by all human, all angelic obedience. But that He should literally have done this—that He, the second person in the Unity of the Godhead, should in any sense have become the second man, the new head of the human race—that He, the Creator of holy man, should in any sense become the substitute of sinful man—that He, the Invisible, should have assumed a material form, taking up the very dust we trod on into His

mysterious person—that He, the Lawgiver, should be seen by the universe in a station of obedience, subjecting Himself to His own laws, and doing this for the express purpose of dying—dying as an expiation for human guilt—dying that justice might have a compensation to accept, and that mercy might have forgiveness to bestow—these are wonders resolvable only into the depths of His infinite compassion for us; this is a transaction which has left no part of the universe in the same condition as it was before; and yet this, all this, is involved in the history of the second man.

## IV.

And this brings us, fourthly, to the consideration of the *right* which the Saviour thus acquired. The voluntary humiliation of the Son of God, I have said, left no part of the universe in the same condition in which it was before. It changed the moral relations of the whole. All the myriads who had lived and died in self-willed disobedience, it convicted them of the deepest guilt, and ratified their condemnation. All who had obeyed the will of God, and had suffered cruel mocking and scourging for obeying it, were now justified in what they had done; for here God himself had been manifest in the flesh expressly to do the same. The law itself which expresses that will—the relation of that was altered; for it was taken out of the dust in which it had been trampled, and was placed on a throne. It received more than *satisfaction*—more than *atonement;* in the obedience of Christ it is magnified, enthroned for eternity. In the history and person of Christ, it is crowned for ever. On this account, the relation of the Father himself, as the Administrator of the Law, is changed; He can now remit its penalty without relaxing its obligations; He can leave its honour in the hands of Christ. He can say to the penitent sinner, "You are free—for Christ's sake, you are free; go and sin no more." And thus "He can be just while justifying the ungodly." The relation of Christ himself is

changed; "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and hath given to Him a name which is above every name; constituted Him the head of a new economy; invested Him with the recovered lordship of the world, given Him a right to the homage of every knee, and the obedience of every heart; and given to Him the agency of the Holy Spirit to enforce that right, and to bring back the world to God."

Brethren, we have here found the right key to the creation of the universe. It is mediatorial—from first to last it is mediatorial. "All things were created *by* Him, and *for* Him." The mediatorial office of Christ is not to be regarded as an afterthought—a supplementary appointment, owing to the unexpected failure of a previous design. It was the primary step towards the creation of the universe. Nor was the fall of the first man in any sense necessitated by this primary arrangement. On the contrary, it implies that, the evil having been infallibly foreseen, the entire plan of the Divine procedure was laid with a view to an adequate remedy. The sin of the first Adam presupposed the saving power of the second. The loss of the headship of the human race by the first man presupposed its recovery by the second. And never does any part of creation answer its highest end until it falls into its place around the throne of Christ. Numerous other ends it may answer; many of them important; all of them, it may be, allowable; but failing of homage to Him, it fails of the chief end for which it was brought into existence. Not till the earth echoed the first promise—not till it became the theatre for unfolding the scheme of mercy which that promise enclosed—did it attain the grand office of its creation. Not till the objects and elements of nature became the recognised images and emblems of that great scheme, did the true reason of their existence come to light. The offices of prophet, priest, and king, found not their true meaning till they became the known emblems of the mediatorial offices of Christ. Till Christ assumed our nature, the great reason for the existence

of humanity itself remained undeveloped. Till he took up our nature and lived as man, no man had lived—that is to say, the Divine idea of what man should be had never been realized—and, till He died, the temple of the universe had been destitute, except in the Divine intention, of altar, sacrifice, and priest. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him;" views everything in relation to Him; and hath invested Him with all power in heaven and in earth. All worship is to be offered in His name, and is accepted for His sake. All preaching is to take Him for its theme. Everything praiseworthy in conduct is an imitation of Him. All excellence of character is resemblance to Him. All progress in excellence is only an approach to the measure of the stature of His fulness. "All things are yours," saith the apostle; but it is only on the condition that "you are His." All things rise in importance, in proportion as they are made available for Him. His followers live only as He lives in them; and live to purpose only as they are the means of diffusing His influence and enlarging His kingdom. Time itself is to be measured by the fulfilment of His plans; for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet—till the last enemy, death, is abolished—and then cometh the end.

Brethren, the future is stored with events. But could we see them all ranged in the order of their importance, one event there is which would be seen towering above, and eclipsing every other—the second coming of the Lord from heaven. We have seen that, prior to the creation of the *first* man, everything was made with a reference to *His* appearance. And we have seen, that from the time of his fall, everything pointed to the advent of *the second man*. All things said, in effect, "We are waiting for Him." But now, from the time "the heavens received Him out of our sight," the face of everything significant is turned in the direction of His second coming. Every message of mercy delivered in His name takes it for granted that He is coming to ascer-

tain its results. Every instance which commemorates His death, is to shew it forth *till He come*—is an act of faith which spans the interval from His first to His second coming. Every pang of remorse, every act of self-judgment, is a forestalment of the general judgment. The continued existence of laws and governments supposes the existence of His government, and the appointment of a day in which He will take cognizance of the whole. All His people are described as looking for Him; this is one of their characteristics—"looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour." "They are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." He himself has kindled the hope. For when here on earth He declared, "This is the Father's will who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." And again He repeated, as if foretasting the Godlike pleasure of the act, "I *will* raise him up at the last day." Every new-made grave, therefore, takes from Him an additional pledge that He will come again. Every sigh which the Christian utters on account of sin—every tear which sorrow occasions him—every unsatisfied aspiration after excellence—every unfinished plan of usefulness—all that sense of incompleteness which pervades His people, supposes the coming of the great Consummator. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"—waiting for the last redemption act—the resurrection of the body. And He himself is waiting to perform it. "For this man," saith the apostle, "after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting"—looking out with the calmness of certainty, but with the earnestness of expectation—"till His enemies be made His footstool," and till His friends shall share His exaltation.

Eventful was the hour which saw man formed from the dust—the hour in which the earth first became the scene

of moral government. Still more momentous was the hour when, after ages of accumulating guilt and of Divine preparation, the earth became an altar for the sacrifice of the great Victim—the hour to whose coming all laws had been looking for their vindication—all the interests of humanity for their recovery—and, when lifting up His eyes to heaven He could say, "Father, the hour is come." But more stupendous still is the hour which yet impends—the hour in which "He shall come again the second time." "Far off His coming" shines. But distant as that scene may be to our apprehension, all the affairs of time look for it—all the events of Providence prepare for it. The wide interval will dwindle to centuries, and those centuries to tens, and those years to months, and those months to days, and those days to hours, till again He will say, but in other tones, "Father, the hour is come!" And, "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." And they shall come forth from their graves to meet Him. And, "He shall change their bodies, fashioning them like unto His own glorious body"—His perfect humanity the glorious prototype of theirs —"according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself."

1. Here, then, we see, first, why Christ is the theme of the Gospel ministry. We have seen that the former dispensation existed expressly to prepare the way for Him. God himself was the preacher then; for every part of the economy was arranged by His dictation; and yet the voice of the whole was made to tell of the character and coming of Christ. And has the subject lost in interest or importance now that He *has* come? Every object then was to be sprinkled with blood, even the book of the covenant, the Bible; and shall the *blood* of the covenant itself, the true sacrificial blood, now that it *is* shed, be less extensively applied? Shall not every discourse derived from the Bible be consecrated by it? God himself "hath set him forth as the propitiation for sin through faith in his blood"—hath set Him forth, placed Him

in the front of His throne, so that no intercourse can take place between God and man but through Him. And is it for the Christian preacher to depose Him, in effect, from His exalted station, or to cast a veil over His sacrifice? Rather let us place Him in the front of our ministrations; let us see our hearers only through Him; let them see us only as His representatives. The great government of God now is mediatorial in the highest sense—has no other basis than the mediation of Christ; that surely is an adequate reason why our preaching should be mediatorial also.

But besides being in harmony with the mind of God, it is the only preaching adapted to the wants of man. It takes in all his history, and every part of his nature. My honoured brother, could all the world be collected here, I need not remind you, that you, as a minister of Christ, could interpret the fears and the hopes of the whole. Here you continue to reproduce all that is eventful in the past, to paint all that is momentous in the future, and to bring both to bear on the interests of the present. Your hearers will often need, often wish, to have their own nature explained; for they come vaguely conscious of a connexion with the past, of a dignity departed, of a happiness blighted, of a lingering admiration of spiritual excellence and worth, and yet of moral conflicts ending in defeat, and of a depravity requiring superhuman resistance. And leading them back into the past, you can point them to the first sin of the first man, and remind them that they are the fallen children of a fallen parent; and tearing away the veil from their breast, you can shew them that their conscience is a dethroned power, their heart deceitful and depraved, their nature polluted in its springs and principles—and every fibre of their system vibrates to the truth of the appeal. They come as *sufferers*, each with his secret sorrow, all yearning for sympathy; and, oh, how tender and sacred the office! that you should be able to lead forth into their midst the great Sufferer—Him "wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe"—and to say to them, "Behold the man.

the Man of sorrows"—and to assure them that, "in that He hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." They come as *sinners*, troubled with a sense of guilt, and with the apprehension of approaching doom; and how divine is your office in having to lead them to the uplifted cross, and to say, "Behold the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world"—"Surely He was wounded for your transgressions, bruised for your iniquities, the chastisement of your peace was upon Him, that with His stripes you might be healed." As *those who have been created anew in Christ Jesus*, they will come yearning after spiritual excellence, and a power to attain it, and an eternity in which to enjoy it; and, as a minister of Christ, you are prepared to meet their necessities. Drawing away their attention from the false standards set up by their fellow-men, you can point them to the second man, "the express image" of Divine perfection. To this, says the apostle, they were predestinated, "to be conformed to the image of His Son;" and this is the very *end* of your ministry, "that as they have borne the image of the earthy, they should also bear the image of the heavenly." And for the *power of attaining* this resemblance, you have to announce that the Spirit of God has become the very "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"—the very Spirit of life, quickening, regenerating, and giving them power to become the sons of God. And as to their longing for ever-advancing excellence and happiness, it is yours to announce that the heaven of the Bible is eternally set apart for both; that *there* excellence will know no pause in its progress from throne to throne, happiness no interruption in its ever-widening, deepening stream. Christ "hath brought life and immortality *to light*," and here that light must flash; hath brought them from an unknown distance, and placed them before us; brought heaven with all its glories into our horizon, and here those glories are to be seen, to be felt, to enclose the hearers, so that they shall feel themselves moving under the powers of the world to come. It is only in this way that they can

be detached from the powers of *this* world, can be made to stand apart as the faithful followers of "the second man, the Lord from heaven." It is only by thus warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that any of them can be presented perfect in Christ Jesus." But, in this way, they can. Oh, with what a mighty power are we intrusted—the power of preaching Christ! The world has nothing to compare with it. God himself cannot commit to us a greater. True, it may degenerate into an affair of mere words, of tame and heartless repetition; the *phrase* "Christ crucified" may come to be substituted for the *preaching* of "Christ crucified." True, the press may so nearly approach what the pulpit ought to be, as to become more than a rival power. But of this we may be assured, that the pulpit cannot be true to its Divine intention without proving to be the mightiest of all instrumentalities. And of this we may be assured, further, that the secret of its might lies in the Cross; here the loftiest poetry, the profoundest philosophy, the mightiest power reside. Man can never supersede it—society never outgrow it. Like some of the yet untried substances of nature, an unknown power slumbers within it. And here, in humble dependence on the Holy Spirit, may the great experiment continue to be made, how much of that power may be called forth for the salvation of men.

2. Secondly, the subject reminds us of the great principle which separates mankind into two classes, and which associates all who belong to one of these in a distinct community, a church—the principle of spiritual relationship to the Second Man. Other principles of distinction, indeed, obtain among men. Physiologists have even propounded the theory of different species of mankind. In order to account for the varieties of colour, and language, and physical structure, they have inquired whether or not the different branches of mankind have not descended from different original stocks. The amount of evidence, indeed, is decidedly in favour of one common origin of the species. But even though the reverse could

be demonstrated, one distinction there is which would separate all these varieties into two parts, the distinction arising from the union of some of them to the second man, from heaven. Class them according to their physical relations, and you will arrange them according to country, and colour, and bodily conformation. Class them according to their progress in civilization, and you will have to break up the other arrangement, and to bring together parties which you had before separated. Class them according to their tastes, and wishes, and affections, and you form a new arrangement, and a stronger compact still. But now select those who, while admitting their common descent from the first Adam, have passed over into a new relationship to the second, who recognize Him as their new and only Head of mercy and happiness, and whose aim it is to identify themselves with Him in spirit, character, and pursuit,—and you have formed a community differing *in essence* from every other. All other communities *agree* more than they differ, for they all have their root in the first man. This *differs* from them all more than it agrees, for it has its root in the second. This is His *new* society. This is the Church—"*His body, the Church.*" He himself is made "head over all things for it." The first man saw his seed; and it was predicted of the second, "He shall see *his* seed"—and here He beholds them. They are "born from above." They are "joined unto the Lord." Their relationship to Him places them in a *new relation* to every thing in the universe, breaks up some of their previous relations, gives a new character to the rest, and forms additional ones of the most exalted nature. Their relationship to Him *transcends* every other—gives them a right to the tree of life —unites them to Him who is *the life*—opens to them the prospect of thrones in heaven. Their relationship to Him is destined to *outlive* every other. You lift your thoughts to the scenes of the last day, and you see the Son of man sitting upon the throne of His glory, and before Him are gathered all nations, all the posterity of Adam, and you see Him separate

them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. On his left hand are seen all those who chose to retain their connexion with the fallen head of humanity; on the right, all who came into vital alliance with the second man, the Lord from heaven. The generalization will be simple; the division definite, one. Every other connexion will have melted away before the final fires. The golden chain which binds His people to himself will be the only remaining bond. Now, that scene will simply exhibit what ought to have been His Church on earth, transferred to His right hand in heaven. His Gospel is continued among us, is allowed to be preached here and elsewhere, simply for the formation of that relationship, the enlargement and completion of that Church. The world is already divided to His eye. The two classes of which we have spoken are as distinct to His eye now as they will be in the last day. At this moment they are sitting, in effect, the one on His right hand and the other on His left. This congregation, mingled as it is to our eye, to *His* eye is accurately divided—separated by a distance which defies all measurement. But, as yet, the division is not final. And He will account His Gospel to succeed here just in proportion as it is the means of deepening "the image of the heavenly" in His people, and of augmenting their number from the ranks of the ungodly—just in proportion, that is, as it induces men to pass over from the mass of worldliness on His left hand, to join the renewed community on His right, and thus to prepare for the grand classification of the last day.

3. Then, finally, what should be our conduct as the professed followers and representatives of the second man—the Head of redeemed humanity? That He does not demand from us impossibilities may be taken for granted; for He wears our nature, "and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." But that His requirements would be comprehensive, urgent, supreme, and that they would be even startling in their extent to an unreflecting, unformed piety,

might have been antecedently expected; for a state of mind which would thus revolt from them, is a part of the very evil from which we have to be redeemed. And that there would be some periods and states of society in which these low views of His requirements would especially prevail, was to be expected. My impression is, that the present is one of those states; that a tacit compromise has taken place, in effect, between the two races of which we have been speaking —between the Church and the world—the Church having given up much of its inward distinctive spirit, on condition that the world would conform to its outward demeanour; and, on the other hand, the Church, it is to be feared, has received much of the spirit of the world, and has not been slow in adopting many of its forms and habits. Indeed, so far has this compromise obtained, that, to insist on the essential, scriptural distinction between the two, has become to a great degree distasteful. To leave the Church in the world was to expose it to a danger which called forth the earnest intercessions of its Divine head; but the world in the Church is a danger a thousandfold greater, and one which should excite universal concern.

Brethren, whatever the *doctrinal* heresies of the day may be, the great *practical* heresy, peculiar to no one denomination, but belonging in different degrees to all, is that of a defective zeal—a zeal which is content to copy, not from anything *in* the Bible, but from everything *out* of it; not from the *Head of* the Church, but from the *unworthiest* of His followers. And will not this sufficiently account for every other deficiency and evil we have to deplore? My brethren, if *you* can be thus content, we shall not be surprised to hear that you are in a languid, lifeless state; just moving, and nothing more; not moving others; not anxious to be quickened yourselves. You will be able to do without earnest prayer to God; you will be able to do without the Spirit of God himself; for you will aim at nothing high, nothing spiritual, nothing at which He aims. But take a high stan-

dard of devotedness—copy from the example of Christ himself—and you will wrestle in prayer for the Spirit of God, for you will find yourselves labouring in a field in which God alone can give the increase.

In no other way *can* the Church of Christ ever answer its great design. So spiritual are its aims, that a worldly Church can never *look* at them. So vast its objects, that a half-hearted piety will never *attempt* them, and would never *attain* them if it did. So various its duties, that an unreflecting piety will never even *know* them. The Church of Christ! why, it is His *representative* to the world; what Christian grace can it spare? It is the *agent* of Christ; what resources can it dispense with? It is the blood-bought *servant* of the Son of God; what part or property of any of all its members does not belong entirely to Him? Christ, a self-sacrificing Saviour, is its *example*—and men sinking into perdition are the *objects* of its concern; can it feel too deeply, entreat too earnestly, labour too devotedly, in order to copy that example and to save those souls? Oh, what devoted followers have some men—some mere human leaders—had, though both their fame and the objects of their pursuit were worse than doubtful—followers whose zeal never faltered, whose lives were a perpetual sacrifice! And poetry celebrates their praise, and posterity converts their names into titles of renown. Here is "the second man," the Head of redeemed humanity—shall He alone be served by heartless followers? So vast and full of grace is His mediatorial design, that He requires all the powers of all His people—has work for them all. And even if He had them, the kindest tones cannot equal the tenderness of His entreaties; the hottest tears cannot express His anguish over human misery; the most throbbing heart cannot beat quick enough to satisfy His eager longing for human salvation; all the influence which the collective Church could bring to His service could not do justice to His free, and full, and gushing

benevolence—could not form channels wide and deep enough to pour forth the ocean-fulness of His grace.

Brethren, in building this house for God, you profess to sympathize with Him in His designs of grace. Then, you will come here to *work* as well as to worship. You have been only providing the *means* of usefulness; now you will begin to aim at the *end*. The first service in this new sanctuary draws to a close; shall it not be signalized by some appropriate expression of your Christian zeal? You have built the altar; what are you prepared to lay on it? You have become "new creatures in Christ Jesus;" will you not aim at becoming new Christians? *Parents,* will you not earnestly pray that *here* your children may be "born again of the incorruptible seed of the word"? *My young friends,* and you who have been long debating the question of a full surrender to God, shall not this be the time for bringing the great question to an issue? A new sanctuary is opened; how appropriate would be the opening of new hearts, hearts to which He had never been welcomed before! "Behold," saith He, "I stand at the door, and knock!" What hearts will open? Who, then, is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? *this* day, before these opening services close? It would lift this place at once out of an ordinary position, and connect it with Eden and Sinai, with Calvary and Heaven—would secure for it a distinguished place in the map of the Divine dominions. It would connect this day with the last day. And it is on *that* day the eye of Christ is fixed. And does the sight delight Him? The messages here delivered—the prayers offered—the liberality of zeal manifested—the summing up of the whole in the last great day—and then the consequences through all the everlasting future—the whole is before Him; and, as He looks on it, is He satisfied? This opening service—we have spoken of its close, but it closes not with the day. Already it is blended with your history for ever; already it belongs to the

history of an everlasting kingdom, is taken up into the affairs of the Son of man, forms part of the imperishable records of His government. Time is precious to Him; this day, each service is precious to Him. For He sees the end of the whole. And He would not have *one* close without its telling usefully on that end. What will *then* appear to have been the effects of this day? On that distant result His eye is at this moment fixed. Oh, could we mark His *looks* as He regards it!—*His* looks! Try, in the silence of solitude —try to imagine them.

Brethren, act on the firm conviction that every prayer you offer in His name, every gift you present in His service, every effort you make for His glory—will heighten His Divine delight, will brighten those eternal consequences of which we have spoken, will enhance your own blessedness for ever. Act on the conviction now; and may God grant you His effectual blessing. Amen.

# SERMON VII.

## THE SON INCARNATE TO DO THE WILL OF GOD.

HEB. x. 5–7—"Wherefore, *when he cometh into the world, he saith*, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but *a body hast thou prepared me:* In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, *Lo, I come* (in the volume of the book it is written of me) *to do thy will, O God.*"

THE text is a quotation from the 40th Psalm; and, as it is here introduced and employed, it may be regarded as answering several questions, which, when it was first uttered, and during the remainder of the Jewish economy, it was likely to suggest. For example, was it calculated to awaken the inquiry, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this—of himself or of some other man?" The apostle here determines that it was spoken prophetically of Christ; that it was uttered prospectively *by Christ.* Was it asked, at what point of time the Messiah was to be supposed to utter it? "When he cometh into the world," replies the apostle; and when, by coming, the dispensation of shadows was made to give place to the "very things" foreshadowed. And as the expression, "mine ear hast thou opened," denoted the readiness of Messiah to hear and to obey, was it asked, "To what extent will He obey?" The apostle replies, to the offering up of His body as a sacrifice for sin. The *immediate* object of the apostle in introducing this Scripture was, to add another to the many particulars which he had already noticed, in which the Christian dispensation rises superior to the Mosaic. "It

is superior in this respect, also," he remarks, "that the *one* offering of the body of Christ upon the cross is a sufficient expiation for sin, and for ever supersedes all other sacrifices."

But while this was His immediate object, other and higher truths than that of the inferiority or the abolition of the Jewish economy are involved in it; and to these, as more suited to our present object, we will now direct our attention. It presents us, for instance, with a view of Christ coming into a world of self-willed, disobedient creatures—coming, not to punish them, but to save; coming to save them by suffering; coming to shew them that the only condition on which He can be a Saviour is, by being an obedient sufferer; coming to shew them that obedience to the will of God is the only true dignity, and to furnish them with the strongest inducements to copy his example.

Viewed in this light, then, the text reminds us that all intelligent creatures can find their happiness and perfection only in obedience to the Divine will; that man has violated that will, and lost his spiritual excellence and happiness; that his restoration, however, and the re-enthronement of the Divine will, have been made possible, by the vicarious obedience of the Son of God; that as many as recover their excellence and happiness again, by recovering their harmony with the Divine will, are bound to do all they can for the restoration of all the rest; and that the weightiest motives urge them to the performance of this duty.

## I.

In the first place, the text reminds us that intelligent creatures can find their happiness and perfection only in the harmony of their wills with the will of God. Need I remind you that, before the first creative fiat went forth, it was entirely dependent on the Divine will whether there should be a created universe at all? and then, that it was equally dependent on the Divine will what that universe should be?

The only thing certain was, that *if* a creation was called forth, it would be an expression of His will, and in harmony with His perfection. Need I remind you that He willed, and myriads of bright and spiritual forms appeared around His throne, each having a will of his own, but all in harmony with His will? Penetrated with the conviction, that to obey Him was their highest freedom, to be like Him their truest glory, they were "swift to do his will, hearkening to the voice of his word." Each voluntarily flew at His bidding, like a thought of God in motion; and at His bidding all stood around His throne; and like a sea of glass, reflected the glory which was there unveiled, while they raised the song, "Thou hast created all things, O God, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Here, then, was solved the first great problem of moral government, that more wills than one can co-exist, and yet be free; that finite wills can be subordinated to the Supreme will, and yet be free; free, not in spite of that subordination, but in consequence of it; free, only so long as that willing subordination continues; so free, as to be accountable for every volition; so free, as to constitute a glorious representation of the Divine freedom.

But was this the only way in which he could be obeyed? Repair to another part of the universe, and receive the Divine reply. Here, another substance has been called into existence—matter. This material substance the creative hand has moulded into an infinite variety of forms, and endowed with an infinite variety of properties; but search among them all, and you will find nothing deserving the name of a will. Where, when the Divine Benignity smiles —where, amidst all the forms of mere animal life, is the countenance to reflect and return the smile? Where, when He speaks, is the ear to hear, and the will to obey? True, He is obeyed; but it is the unresisting obedience of a machine, which cannot go wrong, cannot disobey. He *is* obeyed; but how different the service from the obedience of

heaven! There, His will is done voluntarily, by holy intelligences, who anticipate His bidding, and even exceed His commands; while, here, it is done blindly, involuntarily, inevitably. Here, as yet, no eye looks towards His throne—no heart beats for His honour!

And are these the only two ways in which God can be honoured—by the voluntary service of spirits in heaven, and by the involuntary service of matter, animate and inanimate, on earth? And shall this earth never be the scene of any other, any better service? What if an order of beings were to be created on purpose—beings, uniting in their constitution the spiritual natures peculiar to heaven, and the organs and senses of the material creatures of earth! What if a voluntary being should be made, capable of taking the whole involuntary world which he found in existence when he came, and of offering it up as a free-will offering to God! His will doing God's will; and everything else doing his will!

Listen, and, in imagination, you may hear the sons of God, as they press towards Eden, shouting for joy. For, lo, the problem is solved—the creature is made—God may henceforth be served on earth as He is in heaven. Repair to the scene, and examine the wonderful constitution of the new-made being. He has a sense for the perception of every material object, and an emotion answering to every movement of the world *without* him. But, mark, in addition to all this, he has a will with which to direct his perceptions and control his emotions—a will like the angels—a will, the very counterpart and image of the Divine will—so that if God say, "I will that you serve me," man is made to respond, "And I will to be thy servant." And all material objects and mechanical laws—the whole world—is given into his hands, that he may have wherewith to serve God. Have dominion over all—saith God. Hitherto, they had subserved the Divine purpose without the intervention of any will; but now a creature with a will is to come between them and God,

and is to take them and bear them into the Divine presence as a free-will offering.

Talk not of treasures stored up in the temples of antiquity —of the spices for incense, and the golden vessels for oblation. Wonder not at these. Here was a being for whom the earth was a temple, and that earth stored from the centre to the surface with the sacred treasures for the altar. Nay, that earth entire, as it was seen speeding through space—what was it but an altar at which man was to be perpetually ministering? He was to be the priest of creation. Everything that hath breath was to praise the Lord through his lips. The whisper of the winds, and the voice of the waves, were to find an interpreter in him, and to symphonize with his song. The fragrance of nature, and its richest gems, were to furnish him with incense and offerings. And thus this creature with a will was not only to serve God himself, but all the material objects and mechanical laws of earth were to be pressed by him and promoted into the service of God likewise. Yes, this unconscious globe itself, as if a soul had been given to it—as if the very planet had been endowed with a free will, and had then voluntarily moved into the presence of its Maker, and there exhaled itself away in incense to His praise—was to be sacred to his service. For the whole of it was given to man, and he, whatever use he made of it, whether he ate of its fruits, or drank of its juices, whatever he did, was to do all to the glory of God.

Nor was this the whole of the wondrous arrangement. Examine the constitution of the new-made being more closely still, and you will find that, in his own person, he unites the constitution of two worlds—of heaven and of earth. He has the spontaneous voluntary power of serving God, peculiar to heaven—for he is a spirit; and he has the material and mechanical nature peculiar to earth, for he is in a body. Heaven and earth meet together in him—he is a spirit incarnate. Did we say just now that the unconscious globe itself, as if a soul or a will had been given to it, was now to

be sacred to the service of God? In the constitution of man the idea has been substantially realized. The human body is that world in a compressed form. You cannot name a part nor a law belonging to the one, the counterpart of which you may not find in the other. And do you not see why it is that such a body has been placed under the control of his will—why it is that a body made up of mechanical, chemical, organic, and animal laws should all be given to the dominion of his will? It is that his holy and obedient will might take it into the presence of God, and subordinate the whole to His glory. This is the scriptural explanation. He is to present his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is his reasonable service. And observe, in doing this—in presenting to God a body in which all the laws of the material world are summed up—he is in effect presenting that world itself which has been given him to use.

Now, then, we have seen the will of God done in a threefold manner. In heaven, by the angels, voluntarily; on earth, by the inanimate and irrational creation, unconsciously and involuntarily; and now, by man, in whom the voluntary and involuntary meet—the involuntary body being made subservient to the ruling will, and that will subordinated to and harmonizing with the Divine will. Wondrous arrangement this, and worthy of a God! by which perfect freedom and perfect obedience are harmonized and made one; by which every act of my holy will vibrates to the throne of the universe, and falls in with the will of Him who sits on it; by which the act in which man puts forth his highest energy and his noblest assertion of liberty is, at the same time, the act most perfectly in harmony with the Divine will, and with all the laws of created nature. Grave and solemn privilege! which gives my character, my wellbeing into my own keeping; which makes me a law to myself; which leaves it *possible* for me to oppose the will of Him that made me—that loves me; which, while it places me in harmony with all His laws, yet so places me there, as to leave it possible for me to break

away from them all—to attempt to erect myself into a separate interest, a hostile government; where almost every act of my will—all my most *cherished* and determined acts—still vibrating to the throne of God, shall reach there only to arouse the sleeping thunder of His displeasure, and the hoarse and aggravated echoes of all violated nature.

Tremendous possibility! For, what if the new-made man should abuse his freedom? What if the possibility should become a fearful reality? Who can foresee the consequences? As to his body; what if its hand should pluck forbidden fruit—its tongue utter deceit—all its members become instruments of unrighteousness unto sin? As to the material universe around; what if he should take himself out of harmony with its laws—extracting poison from its plants, and maddening juices from its fruits, and forging its metals into weapons for the slaughter of his fellows? What if he should league with other self-willed beings like himself—league with them solely to augment his power for crushing others, and for openly disowning his allegiance to heaven? Nay, what if, in the progress of man's history, he should come to think of setting up a god of his own? What if, turning his back on the throne of his Maker and his Sovereign, he should go and fashion a block of wood or of marble, and say, "Be thou my god," and fall down and adore it? Or worse still—there is a rebel angel at large in the universe—a sworn enemy to the righteous government of God; what if a man should yield himself up to his control—should be led captive by Satan at *his* will? And what if he should complete his degradation and his guilt by calling the worship of his own vices, religion; the thraldom of Satan, liberty? What if here, where the will of God should be done as it is in heaven, the will of Satan should be done instead, as it is in hell?

## II.

Brethren, I need not say, secondly, that this is history—the history of man. The hour of trial came; and he fell. A

law was given him; and, oh, better had a star fallen from its sphere, and been falling still! he broke away from its sacred restraint—deranged the harmony of his own nature—disturbed the tranquillity of the universe—incurred the penalty of transgression. Mercy spared him, but he relented not; justice threatened him, but he quailed not. His race multiplied; but, with rare exceptions, every addition to his numbers was an additional element of hostility to God. Generation followed generation, only to take up the quarrel and widen the breach. The Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek after God. Alas! they had all revolted: there was none that did good; no, not one.

And what was the quarrel between God and man but a contest of wills? Analyze it, and you will find that the gist of the whole was this: Whose will should be done on earth—The will of the Holiest and the Best, or the will of the guiltiest and the most depraved? And for maintaining this monstrous struggle, men could not plead that they had never known the will of God; for when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. They could not plead that since then no opportunity had been afforded them of recovering the knowledge of His will; a succession of messengers had been sent to inform them—miracles had been wrought before their eyes—Sinai had been kindled, and the will of God republished. They could not urge that His laws were repulsive; their very essence was love—love to God and love to man. Nor could they plead that they had found an easier and a better law; for, having cast off the highest authority, was it wonderful that they should be found embroiled in a contest for superiority among themselves? Such was their actual condition. The great quarrel which at times threatened the race with a war of extermination was, Whose human will should prevail? The great and only point on which they were all agreed was, that they would not obey the will of God.

What a spectacle of anarchy and revolt must earth have

now presented to the sons of Light! Did they think of the morning when they sang together over the new-made being endowed with the lofty power of voluntarily doing the will of God? Alas! he was still voluntarily doing the will of a god; but what a god had he chosen? Did they mark the purposes to which he applied that body so fearfully and wonderfully made? The whole mechanism was perverted—its eyes were full of adultery—its tongue using deceit—its feet swift to shed blood—all its members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. Did they look after those material objects and laws of nature which had preceded his coming, and which had done the will of God involuntarily? He had perverted even these. There was not an element which he had not ingeniously pressed into the service of sin—hardly an object which he did not worship. Its choicest marbles were sculptured into idol forms; its choicest minerals built into idol temples; its precious metals were lavished on idol shrines; and its richest perfumes were burning as incense to idol gods. Did they cast an eye on Judæa? Its law, though derived from heaven, had been made of none effect by men's traditions—that is, their will had repealed the published will of God. Its temple had become a den of thieves. Its sacrificial types had for them ceased to typify. Its whole ritual had corrupted and corrupted, till it bred nothing but Pharisees and Sadducees, and monsters prepared to nail incarnate excellence to a cross.

And did they not then mournfully mark the cause of the whole; the revolt of the will—the demoniacal possession of the will? This was at once the secret of man's fearful change; and constituted, in created eyes, its utter hopelessness. Had his will remained loyal to God—had he been coerced into evil against his will by a power without him—Omnipotence could have crushed the coercing power, and have set man at liberty. But he had consented to sin, his will was the leader of the revolt. What can the government of God accept as an atonement for such guilt—and from what quarter of the

universe can help be expected to come? Had he fallen into evil through some misapprehension of the Divine will, he would only have required to be set right in his judgment in order to be restored to happiness. But no; it was his will that had yielded—had drawn all the powers of his nature after it, and had armed them all in the cause of sin. Where then, even if the means of atonement to God can be found, where is the agency for reclaiming the human will—for restoring man's holiness—without impairing his freedom? Nature knew not—the angels of Light knew not. Had the evil consisted of a mere material derangement—had all material nature fallen into utter confusion—they themselves might have extricated, adjusted, and restored the whole to order; but to render a compensation for sin, and to bring back into harmony with Infinite Holiness a world of revolted wills, what could they do but sympathize with the claims of that Holiness, and deplore the lost condition of that world?

## III.

But even then, when to all human, all created eyes, the universe was empty, utterly void of aid, help was on the way. Even then, when revolted infatuated man was saying, "We will not have God to reign over us," and was vowing allegiance to Satan, *that* God was saying, was swearing, "As I live, I will not the death of the sinner;" an oath whose echoes the universe shall continue to take up and reverberate for ever. Even then His mind was full of a purpose conceived from eternity—a purpose providing the amazing means of human salvation. And even then a voice was heard replying to that purpose, "I come to do it—lo! I come to do thy *will*, O my God. Thy will is my will—I delight to do it—it is within my heart." And that voice came from no uncertain quarter—from no angel ranks—it came, if I may say so, from the centre of the Deity, from the mysterious depths of the Triune God. And the world was spared on the ground of that engagement, and the angels of God held themselves in

readiness to behold its fulfilment; and Judæa was prepared to be the theatre of the great transaction, and unnumbered eyes were watching for His coming, and unnumbered interests depending on it.

But when He comes, what laws will He obey?—what appearance will He assume? What *laws?* the very laws which man had broken. What *appearance?* that of the very nature which man had degraded. And when the fulness of time was come, a body was prepared Him—God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law. And you know what He proceeded to do. All the powers of that body He placed at the disposal of the will of God. Think what He found man doing with those powers, and how He shewed what might be done with them, what compassion might beam from those eyes, what grace might flow from those lips, what blessings might fall from those hands, and how He thus convicted the human will, and vindicated the Maker of that frame. Mark, again, what He did with the laws and objects of nature; how He shewed that, could we gain the whole, it would avail us nothing if we employed it contrary to the will of God—that, were we to lose the whole, or to have only a cup of cold water left, that, if placed at the disposal of the Divine will, would fall in with the glory of God. But there were other laws than those of material nature, laws essential to the spiritual wellbeing of the creature, and to the holy government of God, and He had come from a world where no other law obtained. But here, wherever He looked, He found himself in a world in which almost every law obtained, *except* this; and hence, when asked to teach a prayer, what could He teach but this?—it was the only object for which He had come here—"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." But was not this a hopeless petition? Ah, little did the disciples know what an answer it was about to receive in His own person! Little did they imagine the mighty purpose which even then was swelling in His heart; for, as He said it, His eye was fixed on the place of sacrifice, and He

himself the willing victim, was advancing towards it! But will He live to reach it? for, see, He is in an agony. The dregged and bitter cup is placed before Him; will He take it? Is there no possibility of its passing from Him? "No," saith He; "not as I will, but as thou wilt." But, see, the worst is not yet. A shadow settles on His soul. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Can He *endure* it? But while we ask, He is heard adding, "It is finished;" and He surrenders His life.

Brethren, in that event the will of God was done, in a way in which it was never done before, never can be done again. An eternal purpose was fulfilled, and the whole of God's preceptive law was vindicated, satisfied, enthroned in the eyes of the universe. Considering the dignity of the Being who suffered, had He only signified His willingness to obey—yes, had He never actually come into our world, had He but verbally signified His readiness to come, should His coming be necessary—even that would have reflected greater honour on the law of God, which He was thus ready to obey, than it could ever receive from all human, all angelic obedience. But that He should literally have done this—that He, the second person in the Trinity, should in any sense have come forth from the Godhead—that He, who had known no necessity but that of being, and of being what He was, should have brought himself under obligation—that He, the Creator, should range himself in a line with His own creatures, and subject himself to His own laws—that He should be seen by the universe in a station of obedience; who, after that, *can* refuse to obey? That He *of His own free will* should consent to serve—to *suffer*—what *creature-will* but must feel *constrained* to yield? And that He should do this in order that the will of God, as prescribed in law, might not go unfulfilled—that He should find glory in it—the very highest glory, in this voluntary subordination to it; did it not shew earth *might* be transformed into heaven—did it not stimulate and heighten the obedience of angels—did it not point the whole intelligent

universe the only way to perfection—obedience to the will of God? Yes, by *His* obedience unto death, the will of God was done on earth, as it had never been done even in heaven—done in a manner which makes earth, from its centre to its surface, holy ground—done so as to secure the means of converting even this sin-worn world into a loyal province of the King of kings.

## IV.

And this brings us, fourthly, to the consideration of these *means*. Do you ask how the will of the rebellious world is to be brought back into harmony with the will of God? "Not by might, nor by power"—not by coercion and force; "but by my Spirit, saith the Lord"—by my Spirit taking of the things of Christ—taking of His voluntary obedience, and shewing that He, though in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation—assumed a dependent life expressly that He might be able to obey the very will which man had ruined himself by resisting; taking of His love, and shewing how He wept over the infatuation of our disobedience—how freely He poured out His blood, in order that the law might not take our blood, might be satisfied without it; taking of His mediatorial glory, and shewing that He is now seated on a throne—seated there to receive our submission, to welcome our return, to place us once more in harmony with the will of God, and to assure us of His favour. And, in this way, the Spirit deals with our will *as* will—not compelling, but influencing—not forcing, but shewing it motives—affecting it by reasons, and enabling it to feel them.

1. Now, do you not see that when the *will* of the penitent is secured, the whole man is secured? We just now shewed that, before man was created, the will of God was done here—that is, his natural will—involuntarily by material laws and objects; that man was endowed with the power of doing it voluntarily, and of subjecting his material body, and all the objects of nature to the same service; but that, by sin,

he had not only withdrawn his mind but his body, and all nature also as far as he could, from their allegiance to God. But, now, the recovery of the will is the recovery of all the rest. The whole man returns. His will cannot come back to God alone; his will is the sovereign part of his nature; and if the master-faculty return to God, all the rest come back with it. "We beseech you," says the apostle, "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." Your souls have surrendered—your wills have submitted; and now, therefore, we address *them*—we beseech them, by the saving mercies of God, to let the surrender be entire—to present your bodies also. And can the renewed and obedient will refuse? What! when the man has to make his way back to the long-forsaken altar through a road of mercies? What! when he finds *that* altar transformed into a cross; and on that cross another sacrifice—the body of the Lamb of God; can he hesitate to present his own body as a *living* sacrifice? He feels it to be a reasonable service. And as he takes the living offering into the Divine presence, and brings back with it his property, his influence, his all, and feels that the whole is once more where it should be, in harmony with the will of God—and enjoys the delight of dedication to His service, spontaneously the language bursts from his lips—"I delight to do thy will, O my God."

2. Here, then, is a willing agent for God. Wonderful as was the creation of a finite will at first—wonderful as was the introduction into the universe of a second will—here is a greater wonder still,—the recovery of a lost will to God—a will which had been led captive by Satan at his will, set at liberty, and restored, and once more moving in conformity with God's will. What if he could prevail on other wills to unite with his will—how vastly would that increase his power of serving God! Such a community of wills often exists for other purposes; and wherever it does exist few things can withstand it—it bears everything before it. But

only imagine a community of wills to exist in relation, not merely to some particular end, however good, but in relation to some great central object around which all other objects revolved, and to which they were subservient. Conceive those wills to be moving harmoniously together, not merely towards *an* end, however good, but towards *the* end for which all other ends exist, and exist only as means. Conceive this community of created wills to be ever moving in harmony with the central and supreme will of God—to regard each indication of His will as the loftiest motive for their wills—each movement of His will as the broad and open path of freedom for theirs; suppose even their *desires* to be accordant with their *wills*, so that in uttering the language of the one they should be giving expression to the other—and that the language most expressive of their united and highest energy should be, "Thy will be done"—*thy* will, as the only means of satisfying our wills—and in order that our wills, our whole nature, may find perfection. What a sublime spectacle would such a scene present!—a community of renewed creatures, of enfranchised wills, finding the very perfection of happiness and freedom in the perfection of obedience.

Now, this is simply what the Christian Church should be; and here are the human means by which the world is to be recovered to God. The individual convert is not to live to himself. How can he, when the means of his redemption has been the voluntary sacrifice of the Son of God? How can he, when he is no longer his own, for he is bought with a price? Henceforth he is to glorify God in his body, and in his spirit, which are the Lord's. And how is he to do this, but by *living* for the same great purpose for which the Saviour *died?* God *wills* it; and God's will is now become his will. Are others converted by his means? They are to unite with him for the furtherance of the same purpose. God *wills* it; and they are now His willing servants. "With one mind, and one heart," they are to glorify God. Do they succeed in the conversion of others? Every soul brought

back to God, is to be an addition to them. God *wills* it; Christ prays for it—"that they all may be one, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Do they pant, and pray for, and unitedly will the recovery of the entire world? God wills it, too—wills that "all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." So that, as often as they go into the presence of God and commune with Him on the great topic of His will being done on earth, He unites and compacts them into one body, sprinkles them afresh with consecrating blood, assures them that His will and theirs are one, and sends them forth to effect it: He comes forth with them, moves where they move, speaks through them, works with them—causing them to triumph in every place.

For a Church thus ready, everything is ready; their own property is ready, for they have placed that at God's disposal; their persons are ready, for their bodies are at the disposal of their will, and their will is in harmony with God's will; their fellow members are ready, for they are all filled with the same purpose, and devoted to the same end. The Spirit is ready—the world is ready; for while the Church is saying, *Come*, the Spirit adds his power to the call; and every one that hears, obeys, and sends on the message further. For such a Church, all nature is ready—the very laws of matter, which man had pressed into the service of sin, become subservient to the will of God. All the earth becomes, for such a Church, a magazine of rich resources—its silver and gold, its winds and waves, its labours of art and discoveries of science, its toils of trade and changes of empire—all *tell* on the great result. Was not this their original design?—is not this their ultimate destination? "All things are by him, and for him." His Church is only bringing them back to Him. For this He has been waiting—waiting for a willing Church; for this *all* things are waiting and ready. We ask, then, Is this the state of the Christian Church?

## V.

But, before proceeding to apply and enforce the subject, let me recapitulate. We have seen that every intelligent creature is bound to do the will of God, and is constituted to find happiness in doing it; that man revolted, perverted everything which had been given into his hand, and exposed himself to destruction; that his recovery to God was made possible by the amazing expedient of the voluntary substitution and sacrifice of the Son of God, and, through that, by the agency of the renewing Spirit (the one atoning for his guilt, the other liberating and restoring his will); and that as many as are thus "made free from sin, and become the servants of God," are thus to judge, that as Christ died for all, they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves; that they should henceforth know no will but His, but live to carry out the purposes of His atoning death.

On two points, then, the will of God is clear: first, that all the redeemed should join in seeking the recovery of those who are still in revolt; and, secondly, that as to the manner of doing this, it should be in imitation of the devotedness of Christ.

The question naturally arises, then, How is it, if the Divine provision be all complete, and the sanctified human means so well understood—how is it that the will of God is not universally obeyed, after the example of our Saviour Christ? Eighteen hundred years have elapsed since He said, "Lo, I come," and the redemption of the world was effected. Has the world since then been converted, and again apostatized?—or, has the Gospel been taken to the world, and universally rejected? No; wherever it has been taken, it has been received by numbers. How then, we repeat, is the present condition of the world to be accounted for? *By the state of the Church.*

Brethren, this is the point on which, for a few moments, I would earnestly press you. Whatever the doctrinal heresies

of the day may be—and grievous they are—the great *practical* heresy, peculiar to no one denomination, but belonging, in different degrees, to all, is that of a defective zeal. They seem to forget, that in praying that the will of God may be done in the world, they are presupposing that it is done already in the Church. They forget that their Master could say, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work"—and they are to copy His obedience. They are content to obey in a far different manner—only at times—or in a spirit of rivalry, or with reluctance. And so long have they continued thus, that they have almost lost the sense of obligation to obey in any other manner. To speak to them of copying the devotedness of Christ, is regarded generally as fanatical, and the thing itself as impossible. They are content to copy from each other—age from age, and Church from Church—so that the will of God, as Christ obeyed it, and as His people obeyed it—even as to the *spirit* of that obedience—mean two widely different things.

And does not this sufficiently explain why the will of God is not yet triumphant on earth? God has given a certain constitution to nature; and if men do not observe the laws of *that* constitution, can aught but failure and disappointment ensue? We hear much of the triumphs of modern science; and the secret of the whole is, that men have come to find that they cannot dictate to nature, but must be content to learn its laws from itself. These laws are just God's will concerning the operations of matter; and obedience to these is the lesson of humility which philosophy has had to learn. And this, brethren, this is the great lesson of humility and obedience which the Church has to learn in reference to the laws of the kingdom of grace. This is the great discovery which the Christian Church has yet to make—that it is only by ascertaining the will of God, and then abandoning itself to the performance of that will, that it will ever be honoured as the means of bringing back the world to obedience.

We do not say that Christians have made no progress in learning this great lesson. All the success which they have achieved of late years, as a missionary Church, is owing to their partial obedience to the will of God. But partial obedience will only be followed by partial success. The same God who has given a constitution to nature, has constituted His Church according to certain laws, and has made its prosperity to depend on its acting in harmony with these laws; but they have tried to obtain the prosperity without the obedience. God's will is, that the wellbeing of His people should depend on their constant aggressions upon the world around them; they hoped to find it in living to themselves, and they failed. God's will is, that the Gospel should be their only instrument of success; they tried compulsion, and they signally failed. God's will is, that they should be not merely *active* in His cause, but that they should form a distinct, spiritual, devoted community, copying the obedience of Christ: they have been trying—are trying still—whether less will not do; whether doing it in a manner in which the world can join—can even compete with them—will not suffice; and in so far they have failed. They seem to forget that a want of compliance with the will of God is a part of man's original disease—is the very evil under which the world is labouring—and which they are required instrumentally to remedy. Surely they do not expect to reclaim the world from its wilfulness while they themselves are doing their own will?

But, brethren, deeply as we are convinced that the Church is not alive to the full extent of its missionary obligations, we believe that it is awaking, and will yet feel them more than ever. Doing the will of God partially has involved the missionary Church in its present straits; Christians are gradually learning that doing it wholly will certainly relieve them. They have so far obeyed, that they are shut up to the necessity of obeying still further. God has quickened them; and they have given, and prayed, and laboured as the Church had

long ceased to do. Let them copy the devotedness of their Lord, and the work will be done.

Ask you for motives to such zeal? They come from every quarter—from the heights above, and from the depths below. They come in every form of pity and of terror—of gratitude and command—of heaven and of hell. So numerous are they, that you will die before you can have numbered them all. So weighty, that you will have left the world before you have felt their entire force. We are told of stars whose light has not yet reached the earth; some motives there are whose influence has not yet been felt by the Church. But we can tell you of motives which some have felt, and by which they were borne on in the service of God through a martyrdom of life and of death.

1. Need I remind you that one of these motives is the sublime truth—that the brightest example of obedience which heaven now contains is not an angel form, but He who "learned obedience by the things which he suffered"? He now reigns in the same spirit in which He suffered. Yes, His throne is just as much in a line with the will of God as His cross was. While receiving the homage of the seraphim, His language still is, "I delight to do thy will, O my God!" What an honour is thus reflected on a state of obedience—more than by the devotedness of all heaven besides! What amazing grace that this obedience should be rendered for *you*, that you may share its rewards! And you *are* sharing them. He is pleading, and you are heard. He is officiating, and you are enjoying the blessed results. Think what He is doing as your representative there, and say, what ought you to be doing as His representatives here? He is doing *your* will—answering your *highest requests*—what ought not you to be ready to do in obedience to *His* will?

2. Need I remind you, as another motive, what a theme it is we have to obey and to proclaim. The merest despot finds ready instruments to do his will. Even when his mandates are the butchery of a tribe—the slaughter of a

province—zealots are not wanting to execute the sanguinary task. But here is a Sovereign who calls for agents to go forth to a world on which despotism has done its worst—Satanic despotism, leaving no soul free—commissions them to burst the prison door, and to let the captive free—to smite the idols, and to shiver the chains by which the nations are bound to them—to pierce the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and to proclaim light and life from heaven—to stand at the mouth of hell, and to say to the myriads rushing towards it, "We have seen, and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." And shall this message of life be delivered with indifference—this office be reluctantly discharged?

3. For think, next, of the happy results of the reception of this message, as compared with man's present state. I will not remind you how large a proportion of the earth now borders on hell—how many of its regions in Europe are still lost to God—how many of its lands in Asia, from Nova Zembla to Siam, and from the Dead Sea to the Eastern Ocean, a territory containing two-thirds of the population of the globe, are still lost to happiness—how large a portion of Africa, from the shores of Barbary to the Cape of Good Hope, and from the Red Sea to the Atlantic—and how much of America, three-fifths of its vast continent, is still seeking rest and finding none. I will not attempt to take you round to its idol-gods—call you to listen to its fearful sounds—nor to look on its horrid rites—nor to mark how all its struggles after happiness serve but to aggravate its guilt, and to announce its misery. I will only remind you that, like the troubled sea, it cannot rest. Laws cannot restrain it—nor civilization tame it—nor science save it. Never, till reclaimed to God, can it find its proper place, nor answer its lofty end. But, recovered to a state of holy obedience, all its long-festering wounds would be healed, and its paradise regained. Renewed man brought back into harmony with God,—everything would be seen returning to him—the glory

of Lebanon coming to him—the rams of Nebaioth ministering to him—the ships of Tarshish discharging their gold and their incense at his feet—and he, taking the whole, and laying it down at the feet of God! What a world, when he, with all his tribes shall be seen there in prostrate and adoring homage! What a world, when compared with its all-pervading light, and holiness, and peace—"the former heavens and earth shall not be remembered nor come into mind!"

4. Think, again, how some, influenced by these motives, *have* copied the devotedness of Christ. Summon the men who counted not their lives dear to them for the sake of Christ; and they come from the ranks of prophets and apostles, of evangelists and confessors, of reformers, and martyrs and missionaries. Tell us, ye honoured men of God, tell us the secret of your success. But you need not repeat it. One of your number has already disclosed it. You "thus judged, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them, and rose again." And thus judging, you lived accordingly. But tell us—in pity to our infirmities, tell us this—had you not to learn the devotedness you exhibited? Were you long in acquiring proficiency in the sacred art? Did *you* ever think, as we do, that self-denial is impossible? We admire, and would catch your spirit. Did you not find a state of entire devotedness to the will of God happier, incomparably happier, than a course of defective obedience? We trust we have enough of your spirit to feel that it *must* have been so. From the moment your devotedness became entire, your path was clear. Till then, you were often thinking what bearing events would have on your worldly ease and relations; but from the moment you came to think only of the bearing they would have on the glory of God, your difficulties vanished. Then you could glory even in infirmities—then you could take joyfully even the spoiling of your goods—then, when the axe and the block were brought out and laid before your eyes,

none even of these things moved *you*. In the very spirit of Him who could say, when the death of the cross was before Him, "Lo, I come!" your language was, "I am now ready to be offered!" And in proportion to your zeal was your success. And we are still reaping its fruits, and glorifying God in you.

5. And then one motive there is, which adds force and solemnity to every other—the fact that He who is the subject and substance of our message, on leaving the world, hath said, "Behold, I come quickly." These were His parting words—this the last sentence of His revelation. As if He would ever have the expectation of His second advent fresh and vivid, the last accents which fell on the ear of his Church were these—"Behold, I come quickly!" Do they not imply that there is not a moment to be lost? Are they not meant to stimulate the lingering progress of the Church into activity? Do they not intimate that the eye of Him who uttered them is already fixed intently on the goal, and that He counts each moment lost which does not bring us nearer to it? "Behold, He cometh!"—cometh, not to suffer, but to judge—not now to offer himself up as a sacrifice for sin, but to determine what effects His "*one offering*" *has produced on us*—whether it has melted us into penitence and constrained us to obedience, or has left us involved in more aggravated guilt. "Behold, He cometh!" and what though no distant trump, no flashing splendours announce His approach—yet still He cometh, and every eye shall see Him. Even now is He on the way. To the eye of faith, even now He is advancing on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory—advancing to do the will of God in the judgment of the world.

Come, then, my hearers, and, as if you beheld His descending glory, let each one ask himself, What is the relation which I sustain to Him? You know that this is the will of God—the duty which takes priority of every other—that you believe on Him whom He hath sent. Although, therefore, you could point to His altar loaded with your offerings, it

would avail you nothing in the absence of a living faith. He would still charge you with having His Gospel beneath your feet, trampling His will in the dust.

And you who through grace have believed, "Come," says the apostle, and, as the practical application of this subject, "let us provoke one another to love and to good works." Come, my fellow-Christians, you are the representatives of Christ to the world; what Christian grace can you omit to exercise? You are the agents of *Christ;* what resources can you dispense with? You are the blood-bought servants of the Son of God; what part or property of your nature does not belong entirely to Him? Christ, a self-sacrificing Saviour, is your example; and souls sinking into hell are the objects of your concern; can you contribute too liberally, pray too earnestly, labour too devotedly, in order to copy that example, and to save those souls? And, behold, He cometh to take an account of your stewardship. A brief period more, and, behold, He will have come. Let your stewardship from this day be of a nature to evince your fidelity, and to answer to the sacredness and magnitude of His claims.

# SERMON VIII.

## THE FIELD AND HARVEST OF CHRISTIAN LABOUR.

JOHN iv. 34-38—"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."

### A Missionary Sermon to the Young.

THIS language, you perceive, is highly figurative. The natural was designed from the first to suggest and shadow forth the spiritual. The analogy between the two is not accidental or fanciful. They are linked together by an inward affinity—a preordained relation. Some of these resemblances are so obvious, that every civilized language commemorates them. The relation of agriculture to the higher process of human cultivation is so grounded in this deep-laid analogy between nature and spirit, that, in picture-words, proverbs, or parables, it is to be found universally. He who established this system of analogies knew that they were necessary—that only by means of the visible could man rise to the invisible—that only by this sensuous ladder could his angel-thoughts ascend to heaven. The natural, then, may be said to have awaited the coming of the spiritual, in order to find its highest

significance. Now, therefore, that *He* who had made nature had come—now that He who knew all the great spiritual facts enshrined in nature and underlying its commonest processes had come, and was standing in the midst of them—they may be said, like the bending sheaves in Joseph's dream, to have done Him homage—to have pressed forwards for His use, and to have asked consecration at His hands. To His eye the entire scene of nature and of life was one great fact, with the Divine Idea shining through it. His own body, His own human body itself, what was it but the shrine for the Shekinah—the embodiment of the Invisible—the great acted emblem—God manifest in the flesh?

What wonder, then, that, on the occasion which gave rise to the text, our Lord should be found clothing the spiritual in the vestments of the natural—training His disciples to conceive of the dignity of His position as the great world-sower—helping to the birth the new thoughts and the great desires which their relation to Him was likely to generate? Though His public ministry had but just commenced, He had already begun to appropriate to Himself, not merely the symbolism of nature, but the types of Judaism. Already had John the Baptist pointed Him out as the Lamb of God—the only real expiation—without whom the world would never have had temple, sacrifice, or priest. Already had He himself gone into the temple—the very ark and home of the types—and there, in the presence of priest, altar, and holiest of all, had intimated that He himself was the only reality there—the Divine Reality, of which they at best were only signs.

But these seeds of truth had fallen, as far as the Pharisaic Jews were concerned, among thorns and briars. A kindlier soil awaits His cultivation in Galilee. For the present, therefore, He avoids the persecuting spirit of Jerusalem, and takes the shortest road to Galilee—three days' journey—through Samaria. And will He not now wait till the end of His journey before He resumes His instructions—especially, too, as He will have none to address, His disciples excepted,

but hostile, half-heathenish Samaritans? No; the great Sower has gone forth to sow, and He must needs scatter seeds of life even by the waysides of Samaria. As He entered the fertile valley of Shechem, the scene was alive with the different processes of agricultural activity. Fatigued with travelling—probably from early morning, and it was now mid-day—He stopped to rest at the ancient well of Jacob. He had sent His disciples into the neighbouring city to purchase food, so that here for awhile He sat alone—a pilgrim on the world's highway. "There cometh a woman of the neighbouring city to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." And you know what ensued—how, forgetting His own thirst, He sought to awaken in her a desire for that living water which alone can quench the thirst of the soul—how, finding her unable to apprehend His spiritual meaning, He suddenly turned her attention within, and, as if already sitting on the throne of judgment, disclosed to her the secrets of her own history—how, in reply to her wondering inquiries, He proclaimed the spirituality of the Divine nature, and the universality of the dispensation about to be introduced—and how, filled with joyful anticipations, she hastened away to call others to share the wonder with her. You remember how His disciples, on returning, found Him so absorbed in thought that the calls of hunger were no longer heeded; and how, as He beheld the Samaritans thronging to His presence, His language shewed that His mind had been far away in a prophetic vision of the world sown over with truth, and fruitful in holiness. He who had seen nothing in the living water but a symbol of the life which He had come to impart—nothing in the food which the disciples offered to His exhausted frame but an emblem of the inward refreshment He enjoyed from doing the will of God—now saw nothing in the busy scenes of the pleasant valley, and in the approaching crowd of the Samaritans, but the signs of a glorious harvest, of which He was beginning to sow the seed.

But then came the thought that He must leave the earth

before the harvest-home; that His death and departure were necessary to prepare the way for it. The relation, therefore, in which his apostles would stand to Him was that of reapers —He being at once the seed and the sower—the self-sower —the great seminal word or principle of life. But, besides, that this *same* relation exists between Christ and *all* who take up and carry on the apostolic labour, in a subordinate sense each relay of *labourers* stands in a similar connexion with those that follow. In this lower sense, indeed, *every* labourer in the world's field reaps the fruit of those who have preceded him, and sows for those who come after. For though, viewed as a whole, the final ingathering has yet to come; viewed in parts, it is ever receiving completion. To each generation of Christian labourers it may be truly said, "Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." My dear young friends—(and to you I now address myself) —this language is peculiarly applicable to you—*belongs* to you—as the last who have entered the field of labour—some of whom, indeed, are only now in the act of entering it. Sacred is the ground you tread! Glorious is the succession in which you stand! Tried and consecrated are all the means you are called on to employ! Sublime is the result to be attained! Welcome, youthful fellow-labourers! We *need* your co-operation; we *hail* your accession! In the hope of confirming your purpose and engaging the consecration of your powers, let me aim to shew you the high and all-related position you are called to occupy in the field of Christian labour.

## I.

And, first, let me call attention to the fact, that the field of which we speak is emphatically a sphere of CHRISTIAN labour—a field in which everything sustains a supreme relation to Christ. Many a hand, indeed, had scattered heavenly seed in it prior to His coming. Noah had brought across the flood the germs of the Patriarchal faith—truths more

precious than the fruits of Paradise. Judea, too, had been set apart as the garden of the Lord. Cleared of its ancient heathenism, it had been brought under Divine cultivation. "Truth had sprung out of the earth"—truth more healing than the balm of Gilead, watered by dews more refreshing than those of Hermon. But all the most precious of these truths related to Christ. From the time when the first promise had been dropped into the human heart, like a seed from the tree of life, to the hour when John called the people to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, every heaven-sent truth was a messenger commissioned to prepare the way of the Lord, and to confirm the assurance of His coming.

Nor had this Divine cultivation been entirely in vain. Often had "the parched ground become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. The glory of Lebanon had been given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon." Many a life-giving truth, too, had been carried to a distance, like a winged seed, and had germinated in other lands. Still, the scene which now stretched before the eye of Christ was, taken as a whole, covered with thorns and briers. You remember His own parabolic descriptions of the *state of Judea*. A tree cumbering the ground, with an axe ominously lying at its root, was its fitting emblem. A fig-tree denounced for its barrenness, prefigured its doom. Its fields waved, indeed, but it was only with tares. And it exhibited a show of fruit—but "its vine was of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; its grapes were grapes of gall, its clusters were bitter." For Him who had "come seeking fruit," it grew nothing but wood for a cross, a sceptre-reed, and thorns for a crown.

Looking beyond the confines of Judea, the wide wastes of heathenism met his eye—a world of spiritual sterility. Think of the dreary aspect the earth must have presented on the third morning of the creation-week, when the dry land had only just upheaved, and the fiat which was to clothe it with verdure had yet to go forth. Such was an image of the

world's moral barrenness. Or, worse still, its condition was one not merely negative of good, but positively evil. Conceive, then, of the earth, with all its waters filmed and greened over in stagnant putrescence, and all its rank and matted vegetation exhaling pestilence. The Scriptures speak of "the pollutions of the world"—literally, the miasmata of the world. Every substance, say some philosophers, is surrounded with an atmosphere of its own. The world was surrounded with an atmosphere of moral miasma, self-exhaled—steaming with a malaria in which all spiritual life had sickened and died—in which roots of bitterness alone luxuriated, and attained a giant growth. Yes, look where the Saviour might, the unsightliest parts of the earth's surface—its dreariest swamps and sternest wilds, its impenetrable jungle and volcanic desolation—did but represent the hopeless aspect of man's moral state.

And our Lord not only *saw* the wide-spreading desolation, He knew its deep necessities, and the utter insufficiency of all mere human remedies. He knew the ten thousand vain efforts of art, science, and legislation to reclaim the spiritual waste. He knew how all man's systems of *religion* had proved fearful aggravations of the evil. He had come to a world wrecked of its hopes, and whose last expedient was exhausted. Wherever He looked, He saw scenes of human woe—scenes in which the only objects which met His eye were the chains of captivity, the struggles of poverty, the disappointments of ambition, the misgivings of the self-righteous, the pains of superstition, the exhausted efforts of the sinner lashed by the reproaches of an angry conscience, and unable to escape from a load of guilt. Whenever He listened, He heard the thickening cries of misery—His ear caught a sigh or a sound of woe from every habitation, every breast of man—a never-ebbing tide of the sounds of anguish, strife, and death. And as He looked on the living mass of misery, heaving, and surging, and travailing in pain together, and remembered that it was a chained and a laden

power, wrestling with its bondage, striving to rise, uttering a cry, though without thinking of a listener, yearning after a something undefined, and which He knew His Gospel alone could supply—He felt that its every sigh and struggle was, in effect, an instinctive appeal that He would hasten the work of deliverance.

But how will He meet the deep necessity? For it is a case beyond the reach of mere *teaching*. The world wants not a system, but deliverance; not a mere *method* of deliverance, but a deliverer—a personal redeemer—a being who, taking a survey of man's spiritual wants, can meet them all—can take humanity into his embrace, and invite it to cast itself on his beating heart for repose. How will He meet *this* exigence? You remember the Godlike manner in which He replied to the inquiry, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" He answered not in words—entered into no argumentative defence for His claims. "In that same hour," it is said, "he cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and evil spirits, and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then said Jesus unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard." This is God's ordinary method of affirming His eternal power and Godhead in nature—by the things which are seen. And now that He hath become manifest in the flesh, He continued His own ordinary method. *His* words were *deeds*—His deeds, wonders—His wonders, mercies. And as you see Him preparing for the reception of John's messengers, by surrounding Himself with a mass of misery, disease, and death—and as you behold Him reply to their inquiry by breathing upon the mass, and creating it anew—you behold an emblem of His mode of answering the world's great questions respecting His power to save. Each separate aspect of the world's condition uttered its own anxious inquiry—challenged Him to the proof of His power. As *guilty;* its every pang was a messenger which asked, "Canst thou make it possible for a holy God to forgive us?" As

*polluted;* its every consciousness of self-loathing inquired, "Canst thou renew, restore, lift us to God? Hast thou the Spirit of God?" As *immortal;* its every foreboding said, "Hast thou the keys of the invisible world? Canst thou give us life unending?" The questions came up in the earnest multitudinous tones of a lost race—a race *self*-sentenced already, and only awaiting the final *Amen* of the Divine sentence. And you know how He proceeded to reply. It was not a case for words. It demanded Godlike deeds. And, first, He put on the very nature that needed redemption. And He came and stood in the midst of the ruined race, and made their cause His own. One sacrifice was necessary, and He offered it. One agency was necessary, and He secured it. One ground and proof of immortality, and He furnished it. "The hour is come," said He—as he girded himself up for the great redeeming act—"the hour is come; verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." And He died. He, the germ of all life, descended into the earth. Solemn is the aspect of the fields during the interval between the sowing of the seed and the first springing of the blade—a scene of *apparent* desolation and death. How unutterably solemn, then, was the *moral* aspect of the earth during the time that Christ was silent in its bosom! Imagine that we could now point to a planet and say, "There, in that planet, lies entombed the Son of God!" Would it not assume the appearance of a great moving sepulchre—the very hearse of the universe? And yet our earth became for a time the grave of the great Life-giver—moved through space, carrying in its bosom the Principle of Life. Oh, had man known the magnitude of the interest at stake, during that time every sound on earth would have been hushed in anxious suspense; and, when it was over, and the great Principle of Life emerged, every object might well have commenced an utterance of joy never to be silenced again! If His incarnation was the great birth of

*time*, His resurrection was the great birth of *eternity*. Earth, hitherto the grave of mortality, became the seed-plot of immortality! He could hardly be said to have *preached* salvation, when, lo, the world awoke to find that He had actually *procured* it! Of the *plan* of redemption He had *said* little; but men looked, and, behold, He had *accomplished* it! He had *been* the Gospel, and had *made* it—supplied all its facts, furnished all its materials. So little had He *said* beforehand, that, with His death, all hope seemed at the point of extinction; but so much had He *done*, that thousands since, in every age, have been exploring without exhausting it.

Henceforth, the world was to become one wide scene of Christian labour. "For for this cause Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living"—that, having provided the means of the world's regeneration, He might direct and combine the energies of all His servants to that end; that no Christian man might live and work alone and apart, but might augment the value of his labours, and be cheered in their prosecution, by finding that he belongs to a vast confederation. "Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and hath given to him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow;"—that the world's magi, humble in their wisdom, should recognise His star and bow at His feet—that the world's Samaritans, heretic in head but orthodox at heart, should say, "We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world;"—that the world's Greeks, inquiring, earnest, unsatisfied spirits, should come saying, "We would see Jesus;"—that the world's centurions, honest-hearted children of nature, smiting upon their breasts, should say, "Truly, this is the Son of God!"—that the world's rationalists, like Thomas, should surrender their doubts and their souls with the exclamation, "My Lord, and my God!"—that every rival power, every false religion, every idol god, should be summoned in His name, and, as it falls from its throne,

should surrender to Him its pretended majesty and power;—that every scattered ray of light should be woven into the many crowns which are on His head, every wreath of incense the world exhales be collected into the censer of homage offered to Him;—that, "instead of the thorn should come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier should come up the myrtle-tree, that it might be to *Him* for a name, for an everlasting sign, that should not be cut off."

## II.

Now, secondly, this is a field, in the cultivation of which all the labourers are connected and continuous—"one soweth and another reapeth." They had need to be so; for it is a work for all time. The original command respecting the earth's *natural* cultivation—"replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over it"—implied similar continuity and effort—and is yet unfulfilled. In *each* instance, man, in his *indolence*, would doubtless have fain had the work accomplished *for* him; and, in his *impatience*, would have had it accomplished at once. "But my thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord." By the present arrangement, man finds his own welfare while seeking the good of others—finds the dignity of the individual in the union of the *race*—and finds in the dependence of the whole upon God, the security of human happiness, and the attainment of the Divine glory.

Your own *character*, dear young friends, is not the formation of a day, nor of a single influence. A thousand seeds have germinated in it already, each cast in by a different hand. The *product* of these has been re-sown there again and again. Your character of to-day is the summation of all your conscious past.

There was a time, too, when this *country* had yet to be discovered. Think what a chain of labourers must have been at work here, from the time when the first tree of the wilderness was cut down, before we could have reached the present

point of civilization. And still the work is only in *progress*. Which of our mechanical inventions is completed? Society is in the midst of a great unfinished fabric. Literally, most of the great buildings of Europe, though begun ages ago, are still incomplete. And, if science be a temple, it will be found that it is still rising; and that, though the workmen may at times have been inclined to thwart and to depreciate each others particular labours, yet, without any preconcerted scheme of theirs, the hewn and sculptured stones which they bring from their respective quarries only need to be put together, in order to shew that there is one mind which superintends the whole. If civilization be a pyramid, the first stone was laid before man had yet trod the banks of the Nile; and though every age has seen it advance in some part, its head still rises higher. The *guesses* of one age become the settled convictions of the next. Discoveries link on to each other. Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton—here is a chain of mind—a single line of descent. Art practises, science deduces the laws of the practice, philosophy expounds and theorizes the whole, and so prepares for a wider application of the art. And thus the great plan evolves from age to age. "The present is the child of the past, and the mother of the future."

Similarly, the movements and instrumentalities of the Church are embraced in one all-connecting plan. A principle of unity pervades the entire scope of Divine *revelation* from the Fall to the coming of Christ. Man, made *for* God, and to be redeemed *by* Him, is the great truth which connects and gives continuity to the whole. And this unity, reflected from the mind of God in His word, is found responded to in the history of the world without. Nothing that belonged to the past *economy* existed for itself alone. The long succession of prophets, standing like a line of light along the darkness of ages, "prophesied of the grace that should come unto us." Every prediction, and every type, every voice from the oracle, and every victim bleeding before

the altar, together with every event apparently insulated and adverse, belonged in reality to a system which looked on to the future for its meaning and its value. In *this* sense, the Saviour came to a world prepared for Him, and awaiting Him. Many a system pretending deliverance had preceded Him, but had to fight its way, or to force a place for itself—for no place had been provided for it—and as such it was doomed to perish. But Christ came, not to destroy, but to fulfil—to interpret all that was spiritual in the past—to take up man's fallen hopes—to shew that He himself was the world's great want, by actually meeting its exigence. He came into a world of bleeding altars, to offer Himself up once for all. He entered into the temple, to absorb the types, to rend the veil, and to lead the worshippers close to the mercy-seat. He ascended a vacant throne, to give repentance and the remission of sins. Through *Him* the world *then* began to reap all that *others* had sown. Not a seed had been lost. No man had lived unto himself. The work had survived the workman. Things which had failed of man's particular aims had subserved God's general plan. Nothing excellent had perished. A line, drawn by an unseen hand, had circumscribed and saved the whole.

But more; not only are this connexion and continuity traceable alike in the field of civilization and of religion, the former exists *for* the latter, the material for the spiritual, and is comprehended within it. We err, dear young friends—we do injustice to the great scheme of the world's recovery, if we look at it only in parts and fragments. The philosopher of nature acts far more wisely with his subject, for he views it in its general laws. If you point him to an apparent exception to these laws, he tells you that it is apparent only, that the instance falls under a yet higher law, that nature is a whole; and thus he not merely saves its character, but exhibits its majesty. If he be a sceptic in religion, nearly all the faults he has to find with it are such as arise from his looking at it in parts, from not viewing it as he does his favourite

nature, as a connected scheme. Let him only reverse his treatment of the two subjects, and he would reverse their aspects; nature would then appear to be exceptional, fragmentary, a mass of mystery and contradiction, while revelation would rise on his view sunlike, a law-pervaded and a light-pervaded whole. Better would it be, however, that he should view each as, in a sense, entire in itself. Best of all, that he should ascend to a loftier point of view, where, in the light of truth, he would see the two become one, the natural waiting on the spiritual, and finding its highest value in yielding it service.

Let him not object that the laws of the spiritual and the providential are less clear and traceable than are those of the natural world. He knows full well, if he knows anything on the subject, that even in the material world, his laws hide themselves in mystery just in proportion to their generality and their power. Heat, light, gravitation, electricity—are they not impalpable, imponderable, mysterious? and yet are they not among the all-pervading and ultimate forces of nature? Analogy, then, would seem to *require* that any power superior to these should be proportionally more recondite—that any law *super*natural and comprehending these should be proportionably more difficult to trace. Not only is the mystery *compatible* with the fact, but an evidence in its behalf.

And in affirming the subordination of the natural, the social, and the civil, to the spiritual, what are we saying but that the inferior should serve the superior? Of all the principles of powers which move society, the mightiest *are* those which partake of a moral nature. They appeal to all that is most profound and central in our nature. They draw to themselves the depth and mass of our being. They are greater than mere thrones. They are themselves principalities and powers. He that has them is mightier than all men that have them not. They enlist in their behalf the spiritual and untiring part of humanity, that part which

cannot be fatigued—which needs no pause—allows no truce —entails its cause from generation to generation.

Now, the Bible not only affirms this subordination of every other kingdom, natural and human, to the kingdom of God, it records the proofs of it. It conducts us to a point from which we can survey the course of history of more than four thousand years. In the light of its guidance we see nations the most selfish and unwieldy, unconsciously acting as His "rod," His "sword," parts of the machinery of His providence. We see events the most unmeaning suddenly lighted up with a Divine significance—agents the most obscure, and insulated, and remote, called and invested with a commission from heaven—elements the most feeble and imperfect, gradually rising into importance and taking their place as recognized powers—forces the most hostile, yielding involuntary tribute —the wrath of man, not his faith, his obedience, his humility, but the very wrath of man, his worst passions armed and raging, made to praise God, to yield notes which reach the skies only to blend with the song of the seraphim. We see an entire people ever revolting and wandering, and yet never allowed to pass beyond the lines of a given plan—we see that in that comprehensive plan every useful agent had his post assigned, every adverse event its hour foreknown. And yet we see that the whole series was *so* forelaid that the moral freedom of no accountable being was violated—that an act apparently the most incidental, was yet in harmony with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God—that *the* deed which consummated human guilt, consummated at the same time the Divine purpose of human redemption. Who, after that, can question the all-subordinating and all-employing nature of God's great scheme for man's recovery? Was it not one of the designs of that event to teach the fact?

But, as if to set the question entirely and for ever at rest, no sooner could our Lord say, in His mediatorial capacity, "All power is mine," than He added, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature;" intimating that the use which He pro-

poses to make of all power is to promote the ends for which He died. As if, having entered the spacious treasury of God, and taking account of all its resources—having reckoned up all the agencies at His disposal, and marked their respective capacities for His service—having looked down through all the ages of time, counted its generations, and numbered its events—He had said, "All these shall be harmonized, combined, and made contributory to the one object of human salvation." And the course of the world's history ever since can be understood only as it is read in the light of this mediatorial purpose. Ever since the Gospel was brought to our own land, the history of Britain, properly understood, is only the history of the Gospel struggling for its right place and power among us. It may be quite true, as it is said, that only one-third of the seed which the *husbandman* casts into the earth springs up again. But infallibly true it is, that not a single seed sown by the Christian labourer ever perishes *absolutely*. In the very act of sowing outwardly, he is sowing inwardly, too; and even if the former fail, the latter will be certainly productive of fruit. Though he may see no *immediate* product, the sowing of one *age* may be the harvest of the next. He may close his career at the stake or the block, but the very blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. A Wycliffe's bones may be disinterred, and their ashes scattered to the winds of heaven; but before he has yet descended to the grave, the youthful Huss, growing up in an obscure village of Bohemia, is divinely preparing for the subsequent reception and dissemination of his views. Huss himself may die a martyr's death; but, a century later, and Luther shall be inspired by his example, and shall surpass his labours. There is no break in the chain, no rupture in the continuity of events leading to the one result—the restoration of man to God. Aim at this, and you stand in a noble succession—you walk in a consecrated path—you move within the limits of a Divine plan. Labour here, and you work within a circle of which the Cross is the centre—you reap in

a field where Christ himself hath been the sower—you become labourers together with God—and, therefore, associated with interests too momentous to fail, with efforts too great and sacred to be denied success, with ends and purposes dating from one eternity and embracing another.

## III.

But if the Christian labourers are thus connected and continuous, it follows, thirdly, that we, in the present day, in carrying out their labours, inherit peculiar facilities and advantages. And we do so. "Others have laboured, and we have entered into their labours." We stand as in the midst of a waving corn field. Time was when the seed had not yet been cast into the ground, when the ground itself was a wilderness, when the wilderness resounded only to the howl and the roar of beasts of prey.

I have already glanced at the state of the world when the Divine missionary—the Redeemer himself—was here. And I have observed that His words were chiefly acts. Look at His conduct, as described in the context, in this light, and you will see how immensely the Gospel has moved the world on since then. Why, for example, did the Saviour send His disciples to buy bread of the Samaritans? For the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, and *their* mutual hostility was only a sample of the *general* state of things. Nation stood frowning against nation all the world over. Such hostility was deemed as good as religion—was religion. Even Celsus, in the second century after, adduced it as a conclusive argument against the Gospel, and as enough to prove the madness of its Author, that it proposed to do away with this hostility—that it actually dreamt of uniting Greeks, Lybians, barbarians—all men to the ends of the earth—in the reception of one and the same doctrine. If asked, then, for an explanation of our Lord's conduct on this occasion, in sending His disciples to the Samaritans, and in abiding with them for a time Himself, I reply that it was partly to protest

against this alienation of race from race—to ignore all social distinctions, except those arising from wisdom and folly, righteousness and iniquity—to announce the unity, the brotherhood of the human race—to proclaim that all men are blood relations. Yes, here you behold Him in the act of sowing the first seed of this great world-uniting truth; preparing the way for the sublime commission, "Go, preach my Gospel to every creature under heaven."

I need not tell you of the low estimate which heathenism formed of woman—how it degraded her from her social rank—sensualized her nature. Even the Rabbins forbade her instruction—deemed her incapable of it—first *made* her despicable, and then despised her. Yet here our Lord is seen conversing with one of these despised ones—assuming her power to appreciate truth—vindicating her right to possess it—and even permitting her to become His first herald to her half-heathen fellow-citizens. Here was a prediction and a promise of what His gospel would do for woman, and, through her, for you—for the world. For do not many of us owe it to *her* instrumentality that the Gospel smiled upon our infancy, taught us to lisp the sacred name, beckoned us to its worship, impressed us with its truth? And does not the great cause of Christian missions, and therefore the world, owe it to her hallowing maternal influence that many of its most efficient agents early consecrated themselves to the high office of reclaiming the heathen to God?

I see the Saviour, on this occasion, sowing the seed of another great truth of which we are now reaping the fruit. The object of His compassionate address was not only a foreigner and a woman, but poor. And, doubtless, those with whom He tarried the two days were of the same lowly class. But this was an invasion of another general custom. The poor were supposed to possess *no rights*. If the Greek looked down on the barbarians, the freeman despised the slave, the philosopher the simple, the wealthy—nay, *all* united

in despising the poor. "This people which knoweth not the law," said the proud Pharisee, "are cursed"—this ignorant and contemptible class is forsaken of God and doomed to destruction. Religion itself had become an exclusive privilege—an aristocratic affair. But here we behold *Him* who had been annointed to preach the Gospel to the poor, opening His commission—anointing the masses—taking the poor to His heart—inaugurating the *people* to the privileges of His kingdom. Here, first, we see Him adopting the poor for His clients—raising an insurrection, the insurrection of the heart and the reason, against all class oppression—vindicating the sacredness of individual and universal man as *man*.

Dear young friends, you do not *think* of asking whether these civilizing seeds have germinated or not. The society in which you live demonstrates it. Your only wonder is, that the world should have ever required them to be sown. And this very wonder of yours is a measure of the social advantage you are at this moment deriving from the Gospel. We should *now* deem the *absence* of the very virtues *inconceivable*, the *presence* of which was once deemed *impossible*. Principles and aims which a Celsus urged as conclusive against the Gospel, because, in his view, unattainable, are now become so familiar as to be placed among the lowest of our arguments in its favour.

But we can be more specific still. As to Divine revelation itself; is it nothing that the temple of Truth is *complete*—that age after age saw it rise, till at length the august dome attained its height, and the top-stone was brought forth? As to the *validity* of the Gospel; what if the first onset against it had yet to be made—what if that first appeal against its persecutors, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word"—what if that appeal had only just been uttered—what if we had only just returned from carrying the slaughtered Stephen to his burial, and from looking on the martyrdom of Antipas? Is it nothing to know that though

the Gospel denounced not merely all the gods of the world's Pantheon, but went deeper still, and proclaimed eternal war against the very principles and propensities of human nature which had given them birth, it should yet have triumphed?—that though it has evaded no difficulty, turned aside from no foe, has even gone in search of Satan's seat, it has yet survived every conflict, and found the hour of its crisis the season of its greatest triumphs?—that after passing through every variety of *external* ordeal to which it is ever likely to be subjected, it should prove to have gathered strength from conflict, to have drawn its ablest champions from the ranks of its greatest foes, and be, at present, more vigorous and aggressive than ever? As to its *universal adaptation;* is it nothing to know that, not a people here and there merely, but nations in every stage of civilization, and exhibiting almost every variety of political and moral condition, have abandoned their idolatries and embraced the Christian name—that in its travels of mercy it has pierced continents of the grossest darkness, and made them light in the Lord—calmed the tempest of the soul in the very height and fury of its rage—numbered among its converts many who were once the vilest of their race—and, wherever it has gone, has erected monuments of its power to save? *We* pass to the field of missionary effort over the wrecks of ancient systems, and through scenes of early Gospel triumph—and shall we not feel the inspiration of the scene? The idols we have now to assail have been long ago routed under other names, and in other lands; and the sword we wield routed them.

As to our *home* facilities for sending the Gospel abroad; they are the fruits of ages of toil—of a patience that could not be wearied, and a faith that would not be denied. If the *seventeenth* century was the age of missionary preparation and promise, when the Church was just starting from its long deep sleep, as it caught the wail and the shriek of the Pagan world —the *eighteenth* began to fulfil that promise, as the age of missionary association—and the *nineteenth* took the character

of the age of missionary enterprise. There was a time when the enterprise was the object of almost universal scurrility and invective. Is it no advantage to join it at a period when public opinion has determined in its favour—when it has come to be recognized as one of the great moving forces of the age, to take its place among the noblest of the powers that be? There was a time when the Church itself had to be aroused and conciliated in its behalf. Is it a slight advantage to be allied to it at a time when Christians, whatever their practice may be, have come to acknowledge that they ought to form one great organization, whose prayers should ever ascend, whose resources should be taxed, whose noblest talent, and wisdom, and piety, should be dedicated to the world's recovery to God?

As to our missionary facilities *abroad;* the time was when every door was closed, and every face wore a scowl. Is it no advantage to live at a time when there is no shore on which we may not disembark—no boundary we may not pass, when the world is open? Is it no inducement to advance, when, even in the eyes of its votaries, idolatry is a disenchanted and a hollow mockery—when its altars tremble, and its worshippers desert them—when its very weakness invites assault, and insures conquest? Is it no advantage that the missionary array can take up its ground, supported by the Bible Society, on the one hand, by the Tract Society on the other, and with numerous other aids in reserve—that, set free from every other task, it can concentrate all its energies on its own proper work? Is it nothing that the native mind begins to be leavened with the truth—that a native ministry is advancing to the work—that native churches, here and there, are beginning to be self-supporting and aggressive—that the faith and fervour of whole churches surpass the piety, and shame the lethargy of many a church at home—that, after the lapse of ages, the Christian Church sees the fires of martyrdom again kindled in her distant horizon, and many of her new-made converts consecrating

her afresh in a baptism of blood? Oh, is it not rich encouragement to know, that, at *this* moment, ten thousand hearts on earth, and ten thousand harps in heaven, are blessing God for the missionary enterprise?

Dear young friends, you, as the friends of Christian missions, can hardly be said to have anything to *begin*. Obstacles once considered mountainous—all but unscalable—are now become plains. A highway is prepared for our God. Paths are worn for your feet—paths which were not seldom watered with tears—stained with blood. Methods once untried, and strange events, are now familiar as laws of nature. Of all the experience of the past you are the heirs. For your inspiration, you have the example of men of whom the world was not worthy—their names for your titles—their noble deeds for your heraldry. You have not so much to sow the seed, as to reap the harvest. "Other men have laboured, and ye have entered into their labours."

## IV.

But if the labourers in the missionary field thus inherit from their predecessors a certain amount of facility and advantage, it follows, fourthly, that every generation, and, therefore, our own, has its own proper work to perform. We cannot live on what others have done. We *inherit* it only as we employ it, and only that we *may* employ it. *Their* labours did not leave the world as they found it, and we *enter* into their labours only as we carry them forwards.

Now, far be it from me to assume that I can point to any particular sphere of missionary effort, or prescribe any one kind of labour, and say, Behold the one transcendent duty of the age. But I can *attempt* to do what is of far greater importance. I can tell you what I believe to be necessary in order that you may ascertain for yourselves the special claims of the day. I can characterize the only manner in which those claims should be met, and I can present you with motives so to meet them.

Dear young friends, have you that *first* qualification for Christian usefulness—personal piety? "The field is the world," and your heart is a part of it—is it reclaimed to God? Your heart is that world itself in epitome. And, apart from the grace of God, there is no scene, however blighted and sterile, on the world's wide surface, or however prolific in rank and monstrous growths, which has not its spiritual counterpart in your breast. And, apart from that grace, however fair your character may be in appearance, and whatever part you may take in sowing other lands with the seed of the Gospel—you yourselves resemble a plot covered with weeds, from which every autumnal breeze wafts some winged seeds to infest the region round about. Doubtless, from childhood up, the germs of Scriptural truth have been sown thickly in your hearts. In numerous instances, too, there have been first the blade, and then the ear. Has the full corn in the ear appeared? The tree has blossomed. Has the blossom set, are the fruits of holiness appearing? Do you form a part of the garden of the Lord? By a sense of consistency, *neglect* not the Gospel you assist to diffuse. Pass not untasted the cup of blessing you forward to others. "Sow to yourselves righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."

2. To this qualification, add the enlightened and firm conviction, that you have a peculiar work, an assigned task to perform—a mission. Do not be satisfied with the empty words. Be impressed with the certainty, solemnity, and grandeur of the thing. *For* this you have been bought. Ye are not your own. Say not in a spirit of ignoble self-depreciation, "What can I do?" You are doing something in even saying that—doing evil. Whether you will or not, you are always affecting those around you—transmitting good or evil. *Through* them the impulse spreads and spreads, till myriads, never seen by you, vibrate to your

touch. Now, you *can* affect them *voluntarily*, and all for *good*. You can pervade an indefinite circle with the noblest influence. How consecrating the thought! How ennobling the inspiration! You can stamp your moral impress on the imperishable interests of your race. The state of the dead you cannot affect—they are affecting you. But the living you can. And you have been set down by the hand of God in the midst of the myriads of immortal men now teeming around you, that you *may*. These are the men with whom you will go to the bar of judgment. This is the generation with which you will be more intimately connected in eternity than with any other. They are within the reach of your zeal, the scope of your prayers. A post is assigned you, and a talent intrusted to you for their express benefit. You can serve the *future* best by blessing the present. Like David, who "served his own generation by *the will of God*," your own generation demands a service from you; and God wills that you perform it. Like David, you *can* be men after God's own heart. This is true royalty; and you are called—you are anointed to it. Wait not for great occasions; the moments are flying, and the world perishing. Aim not at singularity; combine with the Church. In the associative spirit of the day, join hands with those who are already organized, and labouring to leaven humanity with the Gospel of Christ. Do this; and live to all posterity.

3. That you may do it intelligently, take a survey of the work the *Church* is performing. Acquaint yourselves with its aims, its obstacles, and its tendencies. Remember that no movements on earth are comparable to them in importance. They belong to the education of the race. They involve the principle of *progress*. In God's history of the ancient world, Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt—the huge quagmires of that day—are passed by comparatively unnoticed; while the family of Abraham—the little living stream running through the great morass—is traced minutely in all its windings. And when at length the sum of modern history

shall be looked at in the light of heaven, the onward movement of the Christian Church shall be seen, like a golden thread, running through the dark woof and tissue of the present, enriching and giving unity and character to the whole. Master the great subject, then, as if you were preparing for examination on it, and it will give meaning and consistency to all you do.

4. For the same reason, acquaint yourselves with the state of that *world* which demands your sympathy and your labours. "Lift up your eyes, and look upon the fields." Dear young friends, the reason why the Church does no more for the world is, that it does not lift up its eyes and look on it. Would the Almighty affect his prophet with the spiritual death of the Jewish nation? He called him to *look* on a valley full of dry bones. Was the spirit of Paul, when at Athens, stirred within him? It was when he *saw* the city wholly given to idolatry. Did Jesus weep over Jerusalem? It was when He drew near and *beheld* the city. And if we would be duly impressed with the spiritual destitution of mankind, we must *look*, and *gaze*, and *dwell* on the subject. *There*—behold them—there are regions of tropic heat, and of ever-burning Parsee-fires; and there are bleak wastes of Arctic rigour. There are the sand-columns rushing through the desert steppes of Tartary; and there the rugged defiles of Arabia. Africa there, with her Saharas and simooms; and there the dense jungles of India, swarming with the serpent and the beast of prey. Next rises to view China, stretching away on every side—a weed-covered moral world; and there the islands of the sea, scarred and desolated by worse than volcanic fires. Mourn not for the *ground*. Wail not for the *land*. It is of *mind* we speak. The desolation is of the spirit. The blighted regions are of immortal souls. Oh, the swarming tracts, the depths of continents never fanned by a breath from heaven; but which, "bearing thorns and briars, are rejected and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned!" Alas! "they are destroyed from morning to

evening; they perish for ever without any regarding it!" Who is not tempted to cry out at the sight, "O Thou with whom is the power, arrest their increase? Stay the multiplication of human life! Forbid the onward flow of existence! It were better for these myriad myriads had they never been born!" But no; the prayer suited to the occasion is prepared—"Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring forth together."

5. But so large-hearted a prayer implies the use of means correspondingly large. And this deep, expansive zeal is the very element wanting, dear young friends, to characterize the aggressive and missionary efforts of the age which you represent. The very fact that you inherit the facilities and advantages derived from the past, justifies the expectation of surpassing effort. If the *two* talents were expected to gain other two, why have you received *five* if not to gain other five? It is only in this way, too, that you can benefit your *age;* not by "building on another man's foundation," but by sketching a nobler design; not by walking abreast, but by leading the van; not by merely working *with* the age, but by inciting it to something better than itself. It is only thus that you can effectually bless the *future*. The influence you now put into circulation will not die with you. It is your legacy to posterity—it will reach to those you never saw, and descend to other times. Yes, traces of your character will appear, ages hence, in the Churches of India and Africa, China and Japan. You are to give Christianity to posterity; what kind of a Christianity shall it have? A languid, feeble, spiritless thing—or a system instinct with life? It is only thus, too, that you can honour the Christian *name*. At present, with here and there an exception, it is *dis*honoured. It was meant to be a name for all heroic qualities, all ascendent forces, and transforming powers. But to name these qualities and powers in connexion with the meagre Christianity of the

day, is felt like a latent satire—a grave irony. Passages of Scripture, descriptive of early Christianity, are felt to be out of place—are in danger of falling into disuse. Our worldliness makes them distasteful—converts them into reproaches. "One thing we lack"—the chiefest of all. Dear young friends, can you not come to our help? Deeply are we humbled at having to ask it; but will you not save us, under God, from dishonour and defeat? Well might our cheek burn with shame at having to make the confession; but the examples of other days fail to affect us. Perhaps your example might. We are not lost to *shame*. Resolve on a larger scale—seize a nobler spirit—aim at a loftier standard of self-consecration—and we will, on our knees, glorify God in you. We are not lost to *hope*. Only let us hear that some of you, baptized with the Spirit from on high, have simply determined to give yourselves up to the power of your principles, and we should feel that the morning of your life, and the morning of a glorious day for the Church, were dawning together. Even at present, remember, it is from *your* ranks that our missionaries step forth—men who offer themselves to be baptized for the dead. Only copy their example—merely resolve that, by God's help, the world shall feel your influence before you die—and you will be effectually serving the Church, and conferring a blessing on all the future. This, this is pre-eminently the work of the day; and you are called on, as by a voice from heaven, to perform it.

V.

Nor do we ask this apart from adequate motives. For, fifthly, the text holds out to all the faithful labourers in the field of Christian activity the strongest inducements and the brightest prospects. "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." Here is *certainty* of reward. It is not so much a promise as a principle, a universal law of the Divine kingdom. Dear young friends, we urge you to no enterprise of doubtful result. That you *may*

succeed in your worldly career, is all that the most sanguine of your parents and friends can say, after having taken every human precaution to insure success. And yet such probability is considered ground sufficient to justify the utmost diligence. That they were right, and *ought* to succeed, has, in every age, been ground sufficient to sustain men through a martyrdom of life and of death. How, then, should it inflame your zeal to know that you are labouring in a field in which you *must* succeed! In scattering the seeds of life, you are sowing your own characters. You are uniting your own interests with those of the great government of God. You are moving in a line with His purposes. Every hallowed aim takes an angel shape; every lofty aspiration enters a bright imperishable form. Allied to any other scheme of effort, you can only *hope* that you *may* be right; identified with this, you may *know* it. There is nothing good which it does not bless; nothing great which does not bless it, and join it. The field itself belongs to Christ. He has purchased it. His blood is on it—*His* blood—the true seed of the Church. His cross has stood in it. His heart is bound up with it. What, then, though the Church should grow weary in well-doing, or worldly enough to doubt the coming of the great harvest? What though in its unbelief it should say, "If the Lord will open windows in heaven, might this thing be!" If His people will not do the work, He will open windows in heaven. "I will hear," saith the Lord—"I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel." All nature shall be set in motion—every spring of Providence shall be touched—new forces shall start into activity. For it is "*God's* husbandry." He, therefore, "that ploweth should plow in hope; and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope." Even "he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again, bringing his sheaves with him; for they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Already, in places, the handful of

corn in the earth shakes like Lebanon. Already we walk in a world whose renovation is begun—is in progress. The first-fruits are gathered. To the eye of faith, the valleys of the wide world stand thick with corn. To the ear of faith, the harvest-home is already rehearsed. To the prophetic view of faith, the Spirit has been poured down from on high, and the wilderness has become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted for a forest; and in that new Eden, Faith walks with a recovered world, admitted to eat of the tree of life.

2. For remark, next, the *transcendent excellence* of the reward—"He gathereth fruit unto life eternal." He has operated on mind—cultivated spirit—sown immortal seed in immortal soil; and he goes to reap a harvest which will be ever growing under his sickle—to pluck fruit over which time and change have no dominion, and which multiplies faster than he can gather it. Dear young friends, have you ambition? and, at thought of this, do you not feel fired? Oh, how ennobling the prospect!—fruit unto life eternal! Think of men's loftiest *worldly* aims. What must it be to be not merely ennobled by the hand of royalty, but to be able to confer nobility and rank? Be anointed to a higher office. Be invested with a nobler prerogative. Away with mere shadows and surfaces. Here are essences, sublime, imperishable, and eternal. Aid us in saving immortal men, and in leading them to crowns of unfading light. We might tell you of vast designs of kingly conquest, designs entailed from age to age, and how even vicious men, by being identified with such great designs, have been rescued for a time from their degradation, and have caught a kind of grandeur of character from their position. Here the conquest of a world is entailed, and you are called on to share the greatness of the task. Here is an object which has made a Saviour, which has developed new features in the character even of the Blessed God; and you are actually called to work with Him, that with Him you may reap the rich result. We might

remind you of that eastern legend, that every time a great man dies, another is somewhere instantly born—born to carry on his works, and to reproduce his character. Here the legend becomes a sublime fact. When Christ died, the Christian Church was born—born to carry on *His* work, and to represent *His* character. My young friends, you are *His* successors; are you rightly alive to your dignity? You are the representatives of Christ; have you awoke up to your responsibility? You are to prosecute His world-wide everlasting designs; do you sufficiently think of the results? You are to gather fruit unto life eternal. The sun in its splendour is but an emblem of the glory which awaits the faithful servant of Christ; for when that sun itself shall be extinct, "they that have turned many to righteousness shall shine forth as the sun for ever and ever.

3. And then, too, the reward of each is to be enjoyed in happy fellowship with all, and is to be thus indefinitely enhanced—"He that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together." See, dear young friends, by identifying yourselves with the great Christian cause, you enter into fellowship with all the excellence and greatness the world has ever known. You fall into a train in which the prophets and apostles, the martyrs and confessors, the reformers and missionaries, the worthies and saints of all ages, have formed a part; a procession of which the front ranks have long been mingling with the radiance of the ineffable glory—a train which still reaches from earth to heaven. You are encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses. You pass to your work through their bending ranks. A part of their joy consists in seeing you prosecuting their work, and emulating their example. Still more will that joy be enhanced when you go to reap with them the united result. But it will not be consummated till you, and they, and the faithful of every age, shall meet at last to reap the harvest of a reclaimed, and a fruit-laden, happy world. Oh! how shall we picture the joy of spirits, rescued themselves from endless death, meeting alike

the embrace of those who were the means of saving them, and of those who were afterwards saved by them? How profound the satisfaction of surveying the great field of Christian toil, when the last workman shall have left it—when the entire labour shall be over—when nothing shall remain but the meeting of the labourers, the congratulations, the wages, the enjoyment of the fruits, the divine occupation of tracing how each separate effort fell in with and promoted the grand general result! How divine the delight of finding themselves all in the presence of the Lord of the harvest—entering into the joy of their Lord—sharing it with Him—rejoicing with Him in the welfare and harmony of all spiritual being, in the attainment of which He allowed them the honour to participate.

On that consummation His eye is at this moment fixed; and He has partially unveiled the sight that you may gaze at it also. Would that I *could* address you in a manner worthy of the theme, or inspire you with a sense of the greatness of the work to which He is calling you! But I make not the attempt. I stoop not to warn *you* against those frivolities of fashion and pleasure by which numbers of your own age —the children of folly—are absorbed. Such trifles be far from you! You have already begun to walk over them—to trample them in the dust—in your way to nobler aims. But solemnly would I warn you alike against being gradually drawn into an all-engrossing pursuit of gain—against taking up with any of the spurious forms of philanthropy with which this age abounds, to the neglect of God's great specific for man's disease—and against adopting *this* in a languid, half-hearted manner. Now, indeed, is the strife and the strain. Many of you have heard of the torch-race, in which the Grecian youth, laboriously trained for it, agonized as they panted, and ran, and passed on the lamp from hand to hand. In the race of generations on the great field of time, your turn has come to seize the light of life, and to carry it forward into the darkness. Are you panting to start? Now

for the fleet of foot and the resolute of will. It is no common time. You come on the field of conflict at the very crisis of the fight. Are you ready for the charge? Under God, you are our hope. We ask not for mere sudden impulses—the effect of passing appeals. Could we but know that you retired to-night into solitude to reflect, to meditate, to lay the subject in silence on your naked heart, to hold unspeakable converse with God respecting it, we should thank God, and take courage. We ask not for mere verbal professions. You owe your salvation not to words, but to deeds—and deeds should beget deeds, living, heroic, godlike deeds. We ask you not to *speak* great things, but to *live* them. Upon your heads the relations, influences, and responsibilities of all the past meet and rest. Upon you "the ends of the world are come." All your powers are due. Your very position consecrates you to the loftiest service. "And who, then, is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" We ask you not to attempt the impossible, or even the extravagant. But, remembering that we speak in the name of Him who himself "travailed in soul," we *do* ask for your earnest resolve and your personal dedication; remembering that we plead within sight of a world perishing for lack of that which you can send them, we do ask you to work, to plan, to labour for their rescue; and remembering that we address you as in the midst of the great field of Christian labour, and in the presence of many of the labourers, we do ask you for the prayer that wrestles, and the liberality that knows how to make sacrifices, and the piety that plans and purposes for the future, and the holy determination that, in the strength of God, you will not only enter into their labours, but will even aim to surpass them.

# SERMON IX.

## THE SIGNS OF THE TRUE MESSIAH.

LUKE vii. 19-23—"And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? When the men were come to him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

THE world knows nothing of its greatest men, says the poet. Some, says Scripture, have entertained angels unawares. But more wonderful still, the Son of God himself was in the world, and the world knew *Him* not. Is it strange, then, that any one who did recognize the presence of such greatness should feel strong impatience to have it recognized by others; especially, too, if he expected the recognition would be followed by an outburst of blessings, and still more if he felt himself responsible for heralding that greatness, and for making it universally known?

Now, such appears to have been the state of mind which originated this message of John to Jesus. By some, it is supposed to have been expressive of rising doubts in the mind of John respecting our Lord's Messiahship. Others, resenting this view as an impeachment of the Baptist's faith, have regarded the message as intended to remove the doubts of John's disciples. The true solution appears to be, that

John burned with a desire to have the Messiahship of Jesus forthwith recognized, and sent this message in the hope of drawing from Him a distinct and public avowal of His official character. That no shadow of a doubt crossed his own mind respecting the validity of our Lord's claims appears from this, that he was prepared to take the decisive answer to the question from the lips of Christ himself; and, also, that the immediate occasion of John's asking it was the report which had reached him in the prison of Machærus of our Lord's mighty works—an occasion surely for removing doubts rather than for creating them. His message, then, originated in impatience, and was only another illustration of the grand impetuosity of a soul chafing and burning to reach its goal. Filled with that eager enthusiasm which sees no difficulties in the attainment of its object, he would have had the new kingdom of God set up at once. Probably, too, he felt as if his own office of herald would be incomplete until the Jews had been brought to recognize in Christ the promised Messiah.

All this shewed, however, that John did not perfectly apprehend the spiritual nature of the new dispensation —that, like the apostles of that time, he was expecting that the kingdom of God would come with observation—come from without, instead of being a slow, quiet, spiritual growth from within—that there was too much of the Old Testament theocracy in his views—and hence our Lord, while pronouncing him the greatest in preparing the way for the new kingdom, yet declared that the least among the truly enlightened and spiritual subjects of that kingdom is greater than he.

1. Were it my object to point out all the lessons to be learned from this paragraph, I might begin by adverting to the remarkable manner in which the idea of the coming of Christ had taken possession of the heart of the world. From the hour when the first promise had been dropped, like a seed from the tree of life, into the human mind, to the day when

John, pointing to him, said, "Behold the Lamb of God," the prospect of His advent had never ceased to be the sustaining and inspiring hope of the world. Rightly or wrongly, they all conceived of Him as of a being whose coming would be the great birth of time. Consciously or unconsciously, their thoughts went forth into the distant future to meet Him. Often did the eye of the Israelite sweep the horizon to descry, if possible, some sign of His approach, some streak of His rising light. The consummation of all the great designs and promises of God was referred to the time of His coming. His familiar designation came to be, "the Comer," "He that is to come," as if the coming of everything else—the coming of futurity itself—depended on *His* coming.

2. We are here reminded, too, of the evidences appropriate to signalize His arrival, and to certify His identity when He had come. Many of these evidences he recapitulates in the text, as if he had said, "To me gave all the prophets witness; from the shadowy outline sketched of me in the first promise, the hand of prophecy has never ceased adding feature after feature, till now the portraiture is complete; compare my claims to be the original, and judge for yourselves of the likeness." Like the white stone, the *tessera hospitalis* of the ancients, of which the separate parts were held by mutual friends, constituting for each a safeguard from imposture and a title to hospitality, the Jews held in their hand parts of a thousand prophetic *tesseræ*, of which our Lord, when he came and claimed to be the world's guest, presented all the corresponding parts, so numerically exact, so proportionally complete, that he could confidently refer the messengers of John to the miraculous adjustment.

3. We are here reminded, too, of the world's slowness in recognizing His claims, and of the reasons of that slowness. The Christ of their imaginations was a very different being from the Christ of prophecy and of reality. And hence the evidences by which they expected Him to enforce His claims answered to the same false ideal. "The Jews required a

sign"—a grand outburst of national glory, having Him for its centre—a summoning of the world to go forth and meet Him—noisy demonstrations and judicial displays of power—all flattering their own self-idolatry by bringing the nations in homage to His feet. "The Greeks sought after wisdom" —sublime speculations on the nature of God—solutions of the mysteries of existence—new theories of the universe. And the Roman—the wondering scorn with which he put the question, "Art *thou* a king, then?" shewed what evidence he looked for—an unfurled banner and a conquering legion. But let us not lavish all our condemnation on their misapprehension and non-reception of Christ. The ground of it lay deeper than national peculiarity and the character of the times. The cause must be sought for in human nature, and belongs to all time. It is the ever-changing manifestation of an unchanging cause—the struggle of the material against the spiritual—of man's persisting self-idolatry against unqualified submission to the will of God. How prone are we still to prescribe modes to His Divine operations! How slow to recognize His presence beyond the denominational lines which we may have drawn! How apt to listen for Him in the earthquake and tempest, the wind and the fire, rather than in the still small voice—to look for Him in the ministrations of pomp, authority, and title, rather than in those of poverty, simplicity, and abasement! How liable to form an ideal Christ, while of the true Christ it may still be said to many a congregation, "There standeth one among you whom ye know not!"

4. But notwithstanding the world's slowness to recognize the claims of Christ, we are here reminded that He allows them to be enforced by evidence alone, and is prepared to await the result. His conduct on this occasion contained a tacit rebuke of John's impatience. It was as if He had said, "My kingdom is spiritual, and the employment of any but spiritual and congenial means would obstruct its consummation. My kingdom is already in actual progress; and, slow

though that progress be, invisible to the gross eye of sense, I see the leaven already working beneath the surface—the grain of mustard-seed already germinating. The result is certain, however distant. I have all time in which to work. Rashness, and the employment of worldly means, would only retard the end which it was meant to hasten." Brethren, that end has been delayed far less by the direct hostilities of His avowed enemies, than by the worldly means employed by His professed friends. Even evidence itself—moral evidence—He employs only in weight and measure. He does not render it irresistible. Man, in his rashness and folly, would call for the dead to appear—for the flames of the pit to flash forth and glare—for evidence compelling and overwhelming—or else for an array of pains and penalties. But He treats mind as mind—carries its strongholds by conviction alone.

5. Observe, again, that our Lord not only employs *evidence*, in contradistinction from worldly display and physical force, but He here promotes *moral* evidence before *miraculous*. Reserving the strongest proof of His Messiahship for the last, He declares, "To the poor the Gospel is preached." After announcing His various miraculous triumphs over man's physical ills, he winds up His claims with this crowning demonstration—"To the poor the Gospel is preached." Brethren, from the moment the Gospel began to be preached to the poor, from that moment a species of evidence for Christianity entirely new to the world began to come into existence. Never, indeed, will the more ancient kind of evidence—the miraculous—lose its proper value. In distributing the different kinds of evidence, the miraculous has its appointed place, and nothing can displace it. But the moral transcends the physical—appeals to a higher part of our nature, and aims at nobler results. And to preach the Gospel to the poor—familiar as the idea may have become to us—so familiar that we can hardly feel its argumentative force—was an entirely new thing in the earth. There was no precedent for it—no prepossession in its favour. The poor

were supposed to possess no rights. The voice of kindness was new to them. If the Greek looked down on the barbarian, the freeman despised the slave—the philosopher, the simple—the wealthy, nay, *all* united in despising the poor. "This people, which knoweth not the law," said the proud Pharisee, "are cursed;" this ignorant and contemptible class is forsaken of God, and doomed to destruction. Religion itself had become an aristocratic affair. But here we behold Him who had been anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor opening His commission—taking the poor to His heart—inaugurating the people to the privileges of His kingdom—interweaving their highest interests with the very witness-mark of Christianity. Here first we see Him avowedly adopting the poor as His clients; raising an insurrection—the insurrection of the heart and the reason—against all class oppression; vindicating the sacredness of individual and universal man as *man*.

But it is to the mode—the form of our Lord's reply—that I would now call your attention.

## I.

First, to the fact that our Lord's teaching consisted, to a remarkable degree, of deeds. Such was here the Godlike manner of His reply to the question, "Art thou he that should come?" He answered not in words—entered into no verbal explanation—no argumentative defence of His claims. Actions speak louder than words. And "in that same hour," it is said, He performed a series of stupendous miracles, and left His deeds to speak for themselves.

And might not this have been expected? The volitions of an infinite mind are deeds. As the Being "by whom all things were made," it had ever been His ordinary method of affirming the eternal power and Godhead "by the things which are seen." Properly understood, every material particle is impressed with His seal—stamped with His image and superscription. Every atom is a letter, and every work a

word. Every element lectures on His attributes, and each globe is a messenger ever moving in His service. The stars come forth nightly on their solemn embassy to proclaim the glory of God. And daily the earth affirms, with voices innumerable, the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God.

And now He who had "made the worlds"—made them as a part of the manifestation of God—had visibly appeared with a view to a yet further manifestation. It was not to be expected, therefore, that the manifestation would be verbal merely, or even chiefly. For how can the imperfect medium of speech convey an adequate idea of the infinite and invisible God? It fails to do justice even to the greatest and best of our own conceptions. It only hints them—helps us to conjecture them—just puts us in the way of guessing each other's meaning, and of understanding each other by sympathy. Accordingly, He came to *be* the manifestation of God, rather than to speak it. "He that hath seen me (said He) hath seen the Father also." In Him "God was manifest in the flesh." Not, indeed, that we would, even in appearance, disparage our Lord's oral teaching—"Never man spake like this man." We would not seem to think lightly even of its quantity or amount. Doubtless it was in that proportion which His wise and perfect purposes required.

1. But, *first*, even His teaching—His oral instruction—consisted of *things* rather than of words. Even "the words that I speak unto you (said He), they are *spirit* and they are *life*." They fell into a stagnant, putrefying ocean, to stimulate and put the whole into activity. They contained a fulness of meaning which His contemporaries could only begin to comprehend; the human mind is still only growing up to them. Like living seeds, they only required to be shone upon from on high in order to become trees of life for the healing of the nations.

2. And hence even His verbal teaching related especially to *Himself*. What portion of it was not either a vindication of acts which He had already performed, or intimations of

purposes which He was about to accomplish? What was His sermon on the mount, and, indeed, the burden of all His parables, but a foreshadowing of the kingdom He was about to set up, of its impediments and its growth, its spirituality and the character of its accepted subjects? All that was expository, hortatory, and of the nature of promise, in His teaching—what was it but an illustration of the blessings He had come to procure, or an invitation to partake of them? As He had been the great subject of prophecy prior to His advent; so, when He had come, Moses and Elias could not descend to commune with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, without making the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem the burden of their discourse. He was the subject of His own teaching. "Never man spake like this man" in this peculiar respect—that He was the text of His own preaching. His words were a running commentary on His deeds.

And this distinctive and important fact supplies an adequate reply to two objections. The first, more frequently felt than expressed, relates to the greater fulness of evangelical doctrine in the epistles than in the gospels, and implies that, if it be not superabundant in the one, it seems strangely deficient in the other. But this objection overlooks the fact we are expounding, that Christ came not so much to preach the Gospel as to procure it—to preach it by procuring it—to perform the deeds which constitute the Gospel; and that not until He had ascended to be invested with all power, and had poured out the Spirit from on high, had He completed the cycle of His saving works.

The other objection—urged from the time of Celsus downwards—relates to the comparatively trivial fact, that parallels to two or three of our Lord's moral sayings are to be found in the more ancient writings of Plato, Isocrates, and others; and hence it is absurdly inferred that the Gospel had been anticipated—that Christianity, forsooth, is not original. To which it might be replied, that, admitting the supposed resem-

blances to be real, and not fanciful, the wonder is that they are so extremely few—that the two or three maxims and sayings referred to are but the distant reverberations of Sinai, echoes of the ancient moral law—and that Christianity is more than a few maxims of morality. We point for Christianity (like our Lord himself) to His *works*—works in which He *performed* that which all other systems had only *promised*—in which He embodied and made *actual* that which others had only imagined as possible and admired as desirable—works in which He once for all met man's deepest wants and his highest aspirations. The necessities of the world were beyond the reach of mere teaching. It was a condition of guilt, depravity, remediless ruin. It required not a system, but deliverance; not a mere *method* of deliverance, but a deliverer, a personal redeemer—a being who, taking a survey of man's spiritual wants, can meet them all, can take humanity into his embrace, and invite it to cast itself on his beating heart for repose—one whose words will be deeds, the deeds of a being mighty to save.

## II.

This prepares us to find, secondly, that, to a great degree, as the text implies, His works were wonders. It is a frequent ascription given to God in the Old Testament, that "He only doeth wondrous things." "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things." To achieve wonders is His prerogative alone. Man attempts them in vain. Man, in his self-idolatry, may ascribe wonders to his fellow-man. But, in his highest discoveries, he only *sees* what God has done; and, in his greatest achievements, only *avails* himself of what God had made ready to his hand. And not only is God the only wonder-worker, strictly speaking He works nothing but wonders. The atom, as an atom, is not less wonderful than a world. Both owe their origin to miracle, and are alike covered with imprints of the Divine signature. Neither do what we call "the laws of nature"

explain the miracle or lessen the wonder. Rather, they double the wonder every moment they continue; for they disclose the presence of the Creator, and proclaim that He is working still. Every star that rushes through immensity is a miracle and a messenger from God, proclaiming, "There is a God of boundless power, and the hand of that God is upon me." Each of them, obediently followed, is a star of Bethlehem, a guide into the Divine presence. And all of them unite—yes, this is the real music of the spheres—the chorus of creation—all of them unite in proclaiming His eternal power and Godhead.

Was it strange, therefore, that when *He* came of whom it was predicted "His name shall be wonderful," His works should partake of the nature of signs and wonders? There was a sense in which He *could* not do anything ordinary, anything which was *not* wonderful. The constitution of His nature made this impossible. In Him, God and man had not only approached, they had coalesced, and become one. This very act had its root in this surpassing wonder. The humblest deed He performed contained in it a portion of this miracle. And the more humble and lowly the act, the greater the wonder of condescension in which it was clothed.

But, beyond this, a large proportion of His acts, viewed in themselves, were truly supernatural. "All things at first had been made by Him, and without *Him* was not anything made that was made;" and now that He had descended, and stood in the midst of the things which He had made, it was not strange that He should display His power over them. He had originally given them the laws they were obeying; what wonder that He should prove that He had *given* them, by shewing that He *could* have given them others—that the slow process of months by which the grape transmutes the moisture of the atmosphere into its own nobler juices *could* be gathered up into the act of a single moment, as when He turned the water into wine—that all those intervening steps by which He yearly multiplies a single grain of corn a hundredfold

could be overleaped, and the result attained at once, as when He multiplied the loaves? He had originally called these laws into being; what wonder that they should recognize the voice to whose bidding they owed their existence—that the tempestuous sea should have quieted itself at the hush of His voice like a little child—that the yielding wave should have offered itself to support His footsteps? He had come to be recognized by the inquiring and believing, to leave behind Him the footprints of a God; what wonder that every element of nature should have pressed forward in His service —that every object should have listened to receive His command? what wonder that, in resentment of man's slowness to recognize Him, the very stones were ready to cry out? He had come, like the lord of His own parable, returning from a far country, to see what his servants were doing, and He found an all-perverting power at work, a wide scene of discord, wretchedness, and ruin; what wonder that at His coming everything should essay to fall into its proper place, and discharge its proper office—that disease should retire at His approach—that at His bidding the blinded eye, the deafened ear, the lame and paralytic limb, should regain their proper functions—that even the prostrate dead, never meant to die but for sin, should hear the voice of the Son of God, and return to life? He was the great power of God—the great central and pervading power of benevolence; what wonder that "the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all?" what wonder that He moved about encompassed by an atmosphere of goodness—that, like the angel standing in the midst of the sun, a Godlike influence rayed and streamed from Him on all around? Miracle, so far from being strange to Him, was the ordinary mode of His agency. Strange as it was to man, it was *His* familiar mode of operation; and there is abundant ground to conclude, that had He not been restrained by an unbelief that would have neutralized the design of miracle—had He only found Himself moving in an element of faith, in

that congenial element His power would have cast off all restraint, and His every act have been a miracle. He had come to bless and to save; what wonder, then, that His power was only the servant of His grace—that He should preach the Gospel to the poor; that He should call for man—the mere, the naked man—and shew that, clothe him in purple, he is not aggrandized—that, cover him with rags, he is not degraded—that man has a nature and a destiny which ally him to the skies; and that He, the Son of God, with a plentitude of grace, before which the splendour of all mere miracles of power fade away, had come to restore to man his lost inheritance, and to restore man to it?

## III.

And this brings us, thirdly, to the fact that His wonders were mercies. His words might have been works, and His works wonders, and all these wonders might have been judgments. But "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." And therefore all His acts of power are found to be in harmony with His design.

All His miracles were miracles of mercy. They did no violence to nature—introduced no disharmony among her laws. On the contrary, in giving sight to the blind, He was but recalling the eye to its proper function; in casting out the demon, He was but dethroning a usurper, and restoring man to himself; in raising the dead, He was but reminding us that death is only an accident of humanity—that man was meant to *live*. The discord was here already—He was but reducing the chaos to order—bringing in a higher harmony—giving to earth the order and happiness of heaven. When did He ever lift up His hand but to warn and to bless—or open His lips but to remonstrate, enlighten, or to console—or "go about" but to do good? What use did He ever make of His power but as a trust to be administered for man's advantage?

And this reminds us that, besides the happiness actually conveyed by His healing acts of power, they had a higher symbolical value. They pointed to the redeeming design of His advent. To many of them, He himself gave this interpretation. Even the barren fig-tree was denounced symbolically, because He willed not the death of a sinner. Remarkably did His miracles contrast in this benignant respect with those of Moses. Remarkable as a coincidence — if as nothing more — is the fact, that while the first judicial miracle of Moses converted water into blood, the first miracle of Christ converted water into wine; and that, too, on an occasion which shewed His sympathy with human happiness—His power of raising the low, and ennobling the common—of turning the elements of earth into the spiritual uses of heaven. Every blind eye He opened denoted that He had come to be the light of the world. Every demon He dispossessed was only another form of the prediction, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out"—humanity as a whole shall be rescued. Every dead body He raised was a pledge of the coming of a nobler life — a life exempt from death. Every act of power was His symbolical Godlike mode of preaching the Gospel—a new proclamation of the spiritual blessings He had come to procure and to impart.

But, as I have already intimated, the greatest wonder of which we have yet spoken was that of the Incarnation. In the presence of this, all His mere acts of power lose their splendour, and disappear. The ancient tabernacle only foreshadowed this. The temple, with the indwelling Shekinah, symbolically predicted it. Every instance of communion between God and man—even the union of soul and body in the creation of man—was only a prefiguration of this infinitely more mysterious union of the Divine and human in the person of Christ. That the Omnipresent should thus have become localized, and the Eternal subject Himself to the successiveness of time; that the Invisible should make Himself apparent, the Infinite expend itself on the finite, and

the Lawgiver be seen in a station of obedience; that the Creator should give Himself to the creature, assuming the very nature of the creature into union with His own; that God should yet be man, bringing Himself under all the conditions of a man—this was itself a miracle, from which every other wonder seems to follow naturally and of course—this was a sacrifice to which only one greater *could* be added.

And you know the nature of that one—"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our condition required that He should die; and with all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, He advanced to the place of sacrifice. Our redemption demanded that the holy and outraged law should receive no less a compensation than that of His obedience unto death; and He humbled, and humbled, and humbled Himself till He had become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Beyond this He *could* not go—even *He* could not go. Yes, when *He* could say no more, He bade the *cross* begin to speak. When His *lips* had uttered their testimony, He opened His *heart*, and spake in blood. When His *life* had ended its proclamation of mercy, He summed up and exceeded all in the utterance of His *death*. Tell me, if you will, that it is the self-same voice which speaks sublimely in creation. I admit and admire it; but, oh! how distant there—how close and thrilling here! True; I hear Him, too, in the events of providence; but how vague and often how awful there—how tender, appealing, and subduing here! I hear Him in His miracles, graciously inquiring, "Why weepest thou? What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? Wilt thou be made whole?" But here I find Him weeping with me—I see Him dying for me—I hear Him saying, "It is finished," and find that it is my redemption which is completed. Hide from me if you will every other object—throw a veil if you will over every other act which even He performed—silence if you will every other utterance which comes from the speaking wonders of His life—but let me see His cross, let me never cease to hear the assurance con-

stantly issuing thence; for it tells me at once that He is infinite love, and my tender, compassionate, all-sufficient Saviour.

## IV.

And this reminds us, fourthly, that His mercies, like the acts by which He replied to John's inquiry, are answers to human questionings and necessities. This is only another mode of saying that the blessings of His redemption are precisely adapted to our exigencies. His works might have been wonders, and His wonders mercies—but there might have been a want of suitableness between our wants and His mode of meeting them. The text, however, reminds us that they are as exactly suited to our necessities as the practical reply which He gave to the question of John's disciples—that, in effect, they are replies to our instinctive inquiries and conscious necessities.

This view, indeed, of the correspondence which exists between *His* doings and *our* inquiries, is one which admits of universal application. He has forelaid the entire scheme of nature and providence with a view to it. No legitimate question on any natural subject can ever arise in our minds which He, the Maker of the mind, has not foreseen, and to which He has not inserted the answer in the things which He hath made. And ten thousand thousand answers are silently awaiting the future questions which shall call them forth The several acts of creation itself *may* have been practical replies to the questions of other orders of being. Possibly at this moment the Creator may be elsewhere exhibiting similar demonstrations of His perfections in reply to similar inquiries. In the amplitudes of space, hosts of intelligent beings may at this moment be collected around the chaos of a world or a system, wondering whether it will ever be restored, or whether all creative acts are at an end. And "in that same hour," while they are thus doubting and inquiring, they may be made awfully conscious of the creative

presence among them—and the fiat may go forth, "Let there be light," and the light of a Divine demonstration may kindle around them.

In harmony with the same correspondence, the revelations of the Old Testament are frequently represented as replies to human inquiries. Besides imparting His mind to man spontaneously, God was graciously pleased to allow Himself, under certain conditions, to be questioned or inquired of; and His reply was called an utterance, a response, an oracle. But then, as all the communications of God to man, however made, are on topics of deep and solemn import, they may all be regarded as responses to human inquiries, although these inquiries may never have been put formally and in so many words; and hence the other parts of the Bible, as well as those which contain His direct responses, came to be denominated *oracles* also. The law of ten commands, for example —each of these is, in effect, a reply to a solemn inquiry. In all ages, the idolatrous tendencies of the human heart have been asking—and a large majority of mankind continue to repeat the question—"May we not have a plurality of gods?" And the first command comes like an oracle from amidst the lightnings of Sinai, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me." Then if we may not—continues the same persisting perverseness—may we not at least indulge our senses with symbolical representations of God? And again the thunder of the oracle is heard, "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image." And hence all the commands of the moral law are denominated oracles; "For," saith Stephen, when speaking of Moses, "this is he who, in Mount Sinai, received the lively oracles to give unto us."

And, indeed, what part of the ancient revelation did not reply to some important and importunate inquiry of the human mind? What are the historical books of the Bible, but God's oracular and sufficient reply to man's earnest questionings concerning the origin of the world and the early history of antiquity? What are all its threatenings, but the

oracles of His holiness responding to the questionings of human fear respecting the punishment of sin and a judgment to come? What are all its promises, but the oracles of mercy replying to the hopes of man concerning pardon and endless life? And what its prophecies, but the answer of the omniscient oracle to man's inquiries respecting the eventful future—and especially respecting the character and office of "Him that was to come." Hence, the entire Old Testament is described as oracular; for, says the apostle, the great advantage of the Jews consisted in this, that "unto them were committed the oracles of God."

But now "He that was to come" had actually arrived. The living oracle Himself was present in human nature. Questions which man's guilt and misery had never ceased to ask were now to receive a full, practical, satisfactory reply. But how will He meet the deep necessity?

You see the messengers of John arrive. You hear the anxious question which comes from his prison-house. Mark, now, the mode in which our Lord replies to it. He collects around Him the blind, the deaf, the maimed, the demon-possessed, the dying—specimens these of the world's *moral* wreck. In the midst of this human chaos He stands, and, yearning with compassion, breathes upon the victim-mass, and creates it anew. Such was His reply to John; and you behold in it an emblem of His mode of answering the world's great questions respecting His power to save. "Go," said He to John's disciples at the close of His miraculous display; "Go, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard." And at the close of His great redeeming work, "Go," said He to His own disciples; "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

## V.

Brethren, have we proved the sufficiency of His redemption? Then ours is no indifferent position, no slender trust. Talk of successors of the apostles! Behold, a greater than

Paul, or Peter, or John is here! In a high and important sense, we are the successors of Christ. We are to be *His* representatives to the world. And our *words* cannot represents His *deeds*. Our mere *professions* cannot do justice to His *works*—cannot give the world an idea of His labours, and sacrifices, and wonders of mercy: reminding us, fifthly, that a practical Christianity alone—a Christianity embodied in deeds of mercy—can adequately illustrate the work of redemption by Christ, or meet the inquiries and wants of the world. "And blessed is he," saith Christ, "who, on hearing this, is not offended in me."

Brethren, our Lord meant not that His wonder-works should end with Himself. "All power is mine," said He, "in heaven and in earth." All power was at that time lodged in Him, as the centre of an ever-enlarging circle. He himself was at that moment the kingdom of God on earth; all the laws, immunities, and resources of that kingdom were enclosed in Him. There He stood, the kingdom of God complete, with all its springs coiled for action, all the new forces destined to vibrate through the world. And it was in Him, that it might be forthwith unfolded in all them that should receive Him. It was not meant that His life and character should be separated from theirs by a great chasm, a vast abyss—*His* all deeds, and theirs all professions—*His* all power, and theirs all feebleness—*His* all sacrifice, all CROSS, and theirs all ease and indulgence. Morally, they are to live His life over again. The holiness and love and zeal which appeared in Him are to reappear in *them* with power.

And do you not see that this is the very character which it is the aim of the Gospel to form? Conducting us into the presence of the cross, it there gives us to feel that we owe our redemption, not to words, but to deeds—to deeds never to be paralleled—to a sacrifice which never *can*, never *need* be repeated. That cross, in the hand of the Spirit, becomes the power of God to our salvation. It deals not with a part of the man. It affects and takes possession of the whole.

Calling his conscience from the dead, it supplies motives for all his actions, objects for all his affections—gives him back his lost soul, and appropriates the whole as a living power to itself. The kingdom of Christ *without* is carried into him, and he himself becomes a kingdom. Everything in Christ becomes a transforming power in him.

Now first he becomes acquainted with the loftiest *principles* of action; for a love surpassing knowledge has saved him, and wherever he may look, he is still within the range of its saving power. The loftiest *ends* lie before him; he is to live instrumentally for the very ends for which the Saviour died. And how can *he* hold back who feels that he is not his own? or how divide his heart with the world, when his only grief is, that his all should so inadequately express his sense of obligation to Christ?

And do you not know that to this Spirit, under God, the Gospel owed its early triumphs? I say not that every Christian *then* was a hero. Nor would I for a moment imply that *Christianity now*, to be genuine, must be ever in public, and be preceded by the sound of a trumpet. This is too much its character at present, requiring an ample space to work in, supposing that all its works must be efforts, spasms, and demanding the presence of a multitude to witness them —signs these, not of an *inward* piety, but only of an outward—not of a *strong* Christianity, but of a weak. Great occasions are, of necessity, only of rare occurrence. Only let the minor, the constant occasions for usefulness be embraced, and we shall not need to seek the greater. We shall be ever finding them without seeking. They will seek us. We shall be unconsciously creating them for ourselves.

Now, such was the spirit of early Christianity. It shunned no duty as insignificant, evaded no difficulty as insurmountable, turned aside from no foe. Its zeal was a flame. Its joy, life from the dead. Wherever it moved, the altars of heathenism sunk around it; the thrones of evil fell. One interest prevailed—who should approach nearest to the like-

ness of Christ, which should do most for the enlargement of His reign. Like their Lord and Redeemer, when approached by the sceptical, they were found surrounded by the poor, the guilty, and the wretched. When questioned by the worldly, they could point to the triumphant change which had passed upon all this vileness—they could say, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." In their life, Christianity was seen teaching by example. To their persecutors, the language of the humblest among them was, "We cannot speak for Christ, but we can die for him." And to their revilers, "We do not *speak* great things, but we *live* them." "The love of Christ constrained them." Deeds begot deeds.

And do we not feel, as we look around on the Church, that that which it needs is the spirit to do "its first works"? That portion of it to which we belong may be nobly averse to all worldly aid from without, but is it equally averse to all feebleness and worldliness within? It may not be relying for the triumphs of the cross on the garlands or gems with which it may be adorned, nor on the stateliness and splendours of the edifice in which it is upreared, nor on a heaven-descending vision of millennial glory; but hath it anything real, attractive, subduing, in the stead of all this? When it hears the Saviour say, "Blessed is he that is not offended in me," it may thrill with amazement that any could recoil from Christ. It may be ready to exclaim, "Though all men be offended because of thee, yet will not I" —it may avow its glorying in the *cross of Christ*; but is it taking up its own cross? Has it any cross of its own? Is it really and truly a Church militant—a Church confronting the world, like an army confronting the foe—a Church so superior to the world, that it is not felt to be a sarcasm to say, that "the world is not worthy of it?" *Instances* of great liberality, and zeal, and heavenly excellence may not be unknown to it; but are they not exceptions, distinguish-

ing their subjects almost as much from the Church as they do from the world? Taken as a whole, is it not felt to be wanting in the spirituality which should place it *apart* from the world—in the power which should place it *above* the world—and in the self-denial which should furnish it with resources for the recovery of the world? Is it, in any sense, worthy of the name—a *suffering* Church—consciously suffering either *from* the world, or *for* it?

Oh! what meant the apostle when he tells us that he panted to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church"? Of course, he meant not that there was anything wanting to the sufficiency of our Lord's sufferings as an expiation for sin. In this respect, they admit of no supplementation. The cross stands alone. But it *does* imply that, besides the *mediatorial* element in the sufferings of Christ, and which admits of no addition, there is also the *moral* element, which, while time shall last, is to be ever receiving additions, and to be filling up. It *does* imply that there is an aggregate of suffering—a definite amount of labour necessary to the completion of the Church, of which Christ has endured His proportion, and of which each of His faithful followers must endure his. It *does* imply that the trials of every Christian, as such, are the continuation and the complement of the sufferings of Christ. In this sense, Christ is supposed to be still on the earth—the Church is supposed to inherit His suffering condition—is supposed to encounter and endure, as His representative, what He himself would, were He visibly present. But where, I ask, are the marks of this suffering? Has the world laid down its weapons? is its enmity with God changed into friendship? If not, let the Church report her conflicts, and shew her scars. If life itself be a conflict, how can he be a Christian who, in addition to the ordinary trials of humanity, knows little or nothing of the higher trials of the spiritual life? If the first ages of Christianity, marked as they were by endurance and effort, were not fabulous, how

can that be Christianity which bears no cross, and studies only to avoid affliction? The Church exists only *while* struggling and *by* struggling. She is not a palace, but an encampment on the field. She is the Man of sorrows personified and perpetuated here below—an organic body, of which He is the head. And her every word should be a work, and her every work an act of holiness or of mercy—an effort for her own higher spirituality or for the world's recovery—that every aim of every member might have its place and its part in filling up the measure of endurance and effort necessary to her completion.

And do we not feel, as we look around on the world, that its condition is one which requires to be met by deeds? Its *antagonism* requires it; for do we not know that it encounters us with deeds? Were its opposition limited to words only, it would be harmless; but it embodies its hostility in an ever-wakeful spirit—in a consistent, all-pervading, laborious activity—in institutions and agencies mighty for evil; and by a similar embodiment of power alone can it be counterworked. Its *sceptical inquiries* demand it; for do we not know that the form which its scepticism assumes at present may be exactly expressed by the question, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Do we not know that it speaks of the Gospel only as an intermediate step from Judaism to something better—that so far from regarding Christianity as final, it is looking for the advent of another dispensation? And this scepticism cannot be answered by words—cannot be put off with pretensions. On the contrary, words and pretensions are the very things which have occasioned and invited it. Yes, let us not lavish all our indignation upon it; let us reserve some, at least, for ourselves, as the occasions of it. Men have inferred the character of Christ from our character; and are they not justified in being dissatisfied with Him—in looking out for another? Oh, let us undeceive them; let us tell them—practically tell them—that though *our* Christ

may appear to be one of little more than words, the Christ of the New Testament is one whose words are works, whose works are wonders, whose wonders are mercies, and whose mercies exactly meet the inquiries they are making. And do we not know that the *wants* of the world require it? Myriads, involved in the darkness of heathenism, have not yet heard that Christ has been in the world. The Church has not yet performed the preliminary work of making Him known. They are still pining for a deliverer; perishing in ignorance that "the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." And of those who do know the historic fact of His coming, how large a proportion live and die in ignorance of His gracious character—His saving designs! Brethren, ours is a sublime trust—a solemn responsibility—to make known to our fellow-men a wonder-working Saviour by corresponding deeds.

And, finally, who does not feel in harmony with these views, that the erection of this place will fall in with the designs of Christ only as it leads to Christian doings? The most copious prayers, unless they bring down the Spirit of God, and the most eloquent preaching, unless it affects the spirits of men, are mere words. But let the Holy Spirit be here brought into contact with human spirits, and the result will be works—deeds of liberality, visits of mercy, schools for the young, institutions of charity—an organisation of living, labouring piety. For an answer to the doubting and the inquiring, you will be able to point to your works—to God's works, wrought through you—to the greatest of all his works, spiritual transformations—"new creatures in Christ Jesus." These transcend the miracles wrought in the presence of John's disciples. These are the works of which the Saviour said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and *greater* works than these shall he do." You will be able to say to inquirers, "Go, and report what things ye see and hear—the spiritually blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, demons

are cast out, the dead in sin are raised, the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

Dear friends, am I wrong in supposing that all present are not the spiritual subjects of that kingdom? And can I be wrong in addressing to them one word of exhortation? Often, doubtless, have you mingled with the great congregation, and listened to the appeals of mercy—but hitherto in vain. Like the disciples of John, you have gone into the presence of Christ—have stood near the scene of his wonder-working grace—have been surrounded by the living miracles of His mercy; were you conscious of no desire to have the great change pass upon you? Like the blind and the deaf, the diseased and the dying, on that occasion, you may be said to have been almost under the shadow of His uplifted hand—within the circle of His life-giving breath. Oh! by what malignant influence have you come forth from time to time unblessed and unsaved? But once more you have come into His presence—once more. Have you never known the deep mortification of finding that you had unconsciously been, on some public occasion, near a loved friend, or a distinguished personage, without ever recognizing his presence? Oh! at this moment, "there standeth one among you whom ye know not." Do you not see Him? He is close by you. Do you not feel Him? He is actually speaking to you. Do you not hear Him, asking, "Wilt thou be made whole?" But think you that He comes for less than to seek and to save that which is lost? And can you, as one of the lost, be here for less than to be saved by Him? Oh, open the door of your soul, and He will come in unto you—will make your conscience His seat, your heart His altar, your regenerated spirit His living temple. And in that day when He shall surround Himself with all the trophies of His grace, you shall be present as a miracle of His saving power.

# SERMON X.

## CHRIST'S LONGING FOR THE COMPLETION OF HIS WORK.

LUKE xii. 50—"I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

BOTH this verse and that which precedes it partake of the obscurity which generally belongs to language uttered in great mental agitation. Taken together, they may be paraphrased thus—"I foresee that the propagation of my Gospel will, through the wickedness of man, involve the earth in the flames of discord; yet, what do I wish? So distinctly do I foresee that such incidental evils will be more than compensated by the blessings of the Gospel, that I could wish those flames were already kindled. But in order to procure those blessings, I foresee that I myself must first be overwhelmed with suffering—be baptized with blood. And so intensely do I long for the accomplishment of human redemption, that, be that suffering what it may, I am impatient—distressed—for its arrival and completion."

This, to my mind, is one of the most solemn and sublime passages in the Word of God. The Saviour could not have uttered it in ordinary tones. It came from the mysterious depths of His heart. The *whole* of His nature uttered it—Divine and human. The thrilling exclamations which he soon afterwards uttered in his agony, were simply the language of his suffering, shrinking humanity—the language of the Son of man; this was the language of the Son of God, looking beyond that suffering to its sublime results, and

eager to endure it in order that He might attain those results. Who present is in a state of mind to sympathize with it? And yet to enter on the consideration of it without such sympathy, to rush into it as into an ordinary subject, is like intruding on the privacy and devotion of the Son of God—like breaking upon the sacred sorrows of Gethsemane. May the Spirit of Christ take of the things involved in this Scripture, explain them to our minds, and impress them on our hearts!

The great truth which the text exhibits, is the entire and intense devotedness of Christ to the completion of His mediatorial suffering, with a view to its subsequent and sublime results. And we propose to shew, firstly, that He *uniformly* felt and exhibited the intense concern which the text expresses for the completion of His work; to specify, secondly, the reasons for His solicitude; thirdly, to shew that His concern for human salvation is still unabated; and, fourthly, to point out the effect which it should have on our Christian devotedness.

## I.

We have to shew, first, that the Saviour *uniformly* exhibited the deep concern which the text expresses for the completion of His mediatorial work on earth.

1. To say that He had not been beguiled or surprised into the work of our redemption, would be saying but little. He had undertaken it intelligently, and with the distinct foresight of all the liabilities which it involved. He had looked into the darkest recesses of depravity in the human heart, and had sounded the lowest depths of human misery, before He came to expiate the one or relieve the other. Yet, having taken a survey of all that would be required from the surety of sinners—having cast up and pondered the mighty sum of guilt to be cancelled, and measured with His eye the thunder-stores of wrath which must be exhausted, and fathomed the pit, which to them was bottomless—he pressed His entire

responsibility to His heart and addressed Himself to the mighty task.

2. To say that He had not been forced into the great undertaking, would be saying but little. There is a large class of Sacred Scriptures which shew that, in saving man, He was only obeying the spontaneous dictates, and gratifying the compassionate yearnings of His own heart. He assumed life for the express purpose of laying it down. He shewed that His heart was full of a purpose formed from eternity. No scene of trial could take Him by surprise—no hour of suffering find Him unprepared. He saw, as from a height, the whole array of duty and trial which awaited Him; and the only emotion He evinced at the sight was a self-consuming ardour to reach the cross which stood at the end of His path —a holy impatience to be baptized with that baptism of blood.

3. To say that the ardour evinced in the text for the completion of His work was not of new or sudden growth, would be saying but little. A large and interesting class of Scriptures exist to prove that there never was a moment in which, even *prior* to His incarnation, He did not anticipate its completion with similar intensity of desire. When the new-made world first rolled round to His eye the habitable parts of the earth, "Then," saith He, "my delights were with the sons of men"—His mind sprang forwards to embrace and bless them. When He saw the insufficiency of animal sacrifices to atone for sin, and beheld, by anticipation, the body in which He was to "take away the sin of the world," He exclaimed, "Lo, I come"—"A body hast thou prepared me" —"I delight to do thy will, O my God;" as if nothing but the immutable arrangements of God could have prevented His coming and completing His sacrificial engagements at once. And when from the bosom of the Father He looked on through the ages of time—marked the successive parts of His great undertaking, as it seemed to pass in slow and stately procession, till He beheld the scene of the rising dead,

all the intermediate ages seemed instantly to vanish. He saw in anticipation the king of terrors disarmed beneath His feet, the world flooded with light and life, the song of myriads reached His ear, shouting His name as their great Deliverer, and with holy impatience to realize the scene, He exclaimed, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death! O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction!" In uttering the language of the text, therefore, He was only expressing the sentiment of eager devotedness to His mediatorial work which He had felt from before the foundation of the world.

4. To say that He did not neglect the work which was given Him to do, would be saying but little. "My *meat*," said He, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work"—in other words, *His devotedness was entire.* "For their sakes," said He, "I sanctify myself"—and He did so. He set Himself apart to the wants and sorrows of earth. The salvation of man occupied His thoughts from the first moment to the last of His continuance upon earth. All the paths of human ambition were open and accessible to Him; but He passed them all by. All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, were laid at His feet; but He saw them as if He saw them not. With a single sentence He could have flashed light on the darkest mysteries of philosophy; but He would not thus debase His mission—He would not spare a single moment from teaching that higher science, the knowledge of salvation. He had ears only for one sound—and that was the voice of penitence imploring forgiveness—the voice of fear and conscious guilt deprecating the vengeance of eternal fire, and crying for relief. He had eyes only for one sight—and that was the misery of man—the spectacle of a world invaded, ruined, lost, and moving along in chains to the pit of perdition. This object filled the whole sphere of His vision; He could see nothing else; and had all the thrones of earth been vacant, and invited His acceptance, it would not have induced Him to diverge a

single step from the path which led direct to the cross. He had tears but for one sorrow—and He wept them over lost souls. So fully was He possessed with the vastness of His designs, that He valued moments, faculties, life itself only as the means of working it out; and through every step of His course He brought the whole of His glory to bear on its completion. Though all the fulness and fire of the passions dwelt in Him, never did He waste a single feeling, but devoted the whole as consecrated fuel for offering up the great sacrifice in which His life was consumed, and by which the world might be saved.

5. And not only was His devotedness entire, including the consecration of all His powers, it was *eager and intense*, not allowing the unnecessary delay of a moment, nor admitting of the slightest increase. To say that four thousand years were allowed to elapse prior to His advent, is no objection whatever to this statement. It only reminds us that His devotedness, ardent as it was, was yet regulated by wisdom—that *His* zeal was not the zeal of improvident precipitation—that He did not sacrifice one interest to another—that He acted on a large and comprehensive plan—that the great object of His devotedness was to reconcile all the true interests of the universe together—and that for some of these He had to wait—others to prepare for—all of them to adjust according to their respective claims. To say, then, that four thousand years elapsed prior to His advent, is no objection whatever. It should be remembered that, as far as man was concerned, the means of salvation were not meanwhile withheld—that during the whole of that time, mercy was all the day long stretching out her arms to save. It should be remembered, too, that *our* interests were not the only interests to be considered—that other orders of being were interested—that all the great principles of the Divine government were involved—that what was taking place during all that time, was taking place in the eyes of the universe, and for all the ages of eternity. There was a sense in which

Judea had to be prepared as the theatre of the great transaction—there was a sense in which the world had to be prepared, in which the great moral questions of its guilt, its ever-increasing depravity, its utter helplessness, had to be worked out and demonstrated—there was a sense in which the inhabitants of heaven itself had to be morally prepared for witnessing, appreciating, and profiting by the great event. Not a moment was lost—not a moment elapsed which was not charged with its appointed duty, and which did not behold every interest concerned travelling with the rapidity of light to the appointed issue. Hence it was that the fulness of time had no sooner arrived than the Saviour appeared. Yes, we believe that it will be only necessary for us to see in the light of eternity how many ends were answered, prior to the incarnation of Christ, in order to be convinced that nothing less than the most intense devotedness could *so soon* have brought them to pass—that during the whole of that time, as He saw the preparation for His advent advancing from stage to stage, the language of His conduct was, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

To say, again, that thirty years elapsed after His advent before He publicly entered on His ministerial work, is no objection to this representation. The probability is, not only that His private life was, in *this* respect, in perfect keeping with His public course, but that it was necessary to it; that but for His years of privacy, His years of publicity would not have presented the sublime spectacle which they do; that during all that time He was, as man, acquiring that greatness of mind, that nobleness of sentiment, that depth and delicacy of feeling, that moral fitness, of which His public life was only the visible expression. Besides, be it remembered that the great design of His advent was the expiation of human guilt; and that, in order to the *perfection* of His sacrifice, the perfection of His humanity was indispensable, and this required that He should reach maturity. There is reason to conclude, therefore, that His path from the throne to the

cross was direct; that every step He took brought Him nearer to it; that never did a candidate for the prize press towards the mark more earnestly than He pressed towards the altar of sacrifice; that so eagerly was He bent on reaching it, that a frequent and enlarged survey of all the interests concerned was necessary in order to restrain Him from hastening at once to its completion. There is reason to believe that, during the whole of His continuance on earth, His sensibilities were all in activity and excitement; that the perishing condition of man made a constant demand, a perpetual drain on His pity, sufficient to exhaust every heart but One, which was daily replenished at the fountain of compassion itself. Yes, there is reason to believe that He endured at times paroxysms of anguish so great, that no compound of mortal elements, unless supernaturally sustained, could have outlived them; that His course would have been much sooner run—that He would have fallen, exhausted in body and mind, before the cross was reached—had He not lived in immediate communication with a hidden source of inexhaustible strength.

## II.

But why this eager and intense desire to reach the goal of His humiliation? Surely He was not in love with suffering! Surely He did not overrate the importance of the results dependent on it! Let us proceed, secondly, to specify some of the reasons which account for it, and we shall find that it was not only explicable and justifiable, but infinitely *necessary*—well for a guilty world that His zeal was not a particle less.

1. For what? He had undertaken to minister to the relief of a world groaning in its misery—and all that misery was before Him. He did not—by necessity of nature He *could not*—content Himself, as we do, with vague impressions of human woe. He saw it with a distinctness and felt it with a power which made it all His own. Wherever He looked, He saw scenes and wastes of human woe—scenes in which

the only objects which met His eye were the chains of captivity, the pains of superstition, the struggles of poverty, the disappointments of ambition, the misgivings of the self-righteous, the exhausted efforts of the sinner, lashed by the reproaches of an angry conscience, and labouring to escape from a load of guilt. Whenever He listened, He heard the thickening cries of misery; His ear caught a sigh or a sound of woe from every habitation, every breast of man—a never-ebbing tide of the sounds of anguish, strife, and death. And as He looked on the living mass of misery, heaving, and surging, and travailing in pain together, and remembered that it was a chained and laden power wrestling with its bondage, striving to rise, yearning after a something undefined, and which His Gospel alone could supply, He felt that its every sigh and its every struggle was, in effect, a distinct appeal that He would hasten the work of deliverance, and He was straitened until the work was accomplished.

2. But there was more than misery to be remedied—there was guilt, the cause of it all—and that He had undertaken to atone for. He knew the history of sin. He had seen it in its awful origin, expelling the angels from heaven, and preparing for them a hell; and He knew that, had justice taken its natural course, man would have shared the same fate. But He had averted the stroke. He had engaged to render compensation in His own person. On the ground of that engagement man had been spared. Ages had elapsed since then; and He knew that during every moment of the time, man had gone on, aggravating His guilt in every possible way, and outraging the government of God; and that, consequently, every principle of that government had been crying louder and louder for the promised compensation, till now these cries had reached a height which proclaimed that the hour of atonement had come, and that to delay it would be to shake every pillar of the Divine government and to involve the earth in instant flames. Perfectly sympathizing, therefore, as He did with those outraged laws—feeling as

He did that they were all looking to Him for vindication—and knowing as He did what would be the just but tremendous alternative were they to be disappointed of their expected due, He pressed towards the cross, and confessed Himself straitened till the great crisis had passed.

3. But more still. There was more than the misery of man to be remedied—more than the rights of justice to be satisfied; there was the character of God to be embodied and made manifest as the God of love—and He had undertaken that. "Oh, righteous Father," said He, "the world hath not known thee!" And hence its alienation from Thee. And He knew that, as all our alienation had arisen from our disbelief of the love of God, so the recovery of our affections depended on His reimpressing the conviction of that love upon our hearts. But how shall this be done? Has not God been aiming at it already for thousands of years? What can the nature of that act be which shall effect it now—which shall at once do justice to the love of God, and shame or melt the world into the belief of it? One act there was, and only one, and hence His eagerness to perform it—"the Son of man must be lifted up." In that act the heart of God himself will be seen beating and bleeding for human salvation. Beyond that act even infinite compassion itself cannot go. After that act all the holy universe will unite in attesting that *God is love.* And hence the anxiety of Christ to perform the act which should prove it. For to wipe off every stain from the character of God, and to present it in its real glory, infinitely outweighed with Him every other consideration.

4. And this reminds us of another reason to account for His eagerness to reach the cross—the glory which should accrue to God in the salvation of mankind. He knew that by dying He should not merely vindicate the character of God—not merely win for it the admiration of heaven—but that a number which no man can number would be redeemed from among men. He *knew* this. There were times when the vision came before Him—when He saw the darkness of

earth rolled away, and the world flooded with light and life —when He saw the myriads of the saved in heaven casting their crowns at His feet, and ascribing their salvation to God and to the Lamb. And for the joy thus set before Him He was eager to endure the cross, despising the shame. Yes, in proportion to the grandeur of the results dependent on it, was the strength of His ardour to endure it; and in proportion to that, He felt straitened until it was endured.

The pillars of human hope had been gradually bending in and leaning on Him with greater and still greater pressure, till now His hand upheld the whole—how earnestly did He long to erect and announce the cross as the stay and support of the sinking world! From the beginning of time every being, from every quarter of the Divine dominions, may be said to have been looking to Him and collecting around Him, till now they pressed upon Him on all sides round. Every lover of mercy was there—every minister of Divine justice —every friend of man. He saw that there was not an eye which was not fixed on Him—felt that there was not a single principle which was not resting on Him entirely for support. Oh, if there be a passage in Scripture, the meaning of which we must die in order to comprehend, it is that which the Saviour uttered when at this crisis He exclaimed, as if He felt all the infinite capabilities of His nature in stress, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" And if there be a passage, the meaning of which it will require an eternity fully to expand, it is that which He uttered the moment the work was accomplished, "It is finished!"—words, I apprehend, meant more for heaven than earth—meant more for the ear of invisible beings—words for which whole orders of beings had been held in anxious suspense—and to hear which the universe had been hushed into breathless silence. Often, we may suppose, had cherubim and seraphim asked with intense concern, "Has the crisis come? Is the great transaction past?" And as often as they heard that it was yet to come, their concern for the issue grew more intense. When, there-

fore, at length the words were uttered, pangs of unknown solicitude were allayed—a burden fell from the minds of the blessed—the universe breathed more freely—the announcement was transmitted like lightning from rank to rank of the intelligent creation, till the remotest region resounded with the glad report—the Gospel of heaven—"It is finished!" Now, it was with the distinct foresight that such, and far more, would be the sublime result of His death, and with the intense desire that such should be, that He now travailed in soul, and was in pangs for its accomplishment.

## III.

But we have to shew, thirdly, that though the great crisis is passed, the concern of Christ for the salvation of man is undiminished. True, as far as that concern involved suffering, it has ceased. All that was toilsome He hath done—all that was penal He hath exhausted—the cup of suffering He hath drained—the ignominy is ended, never, never to be repeated. "He dieth no more." "It is finished." But the concern expressed in the text looked beyond *that!* He viewed the cross only as a means to an end; so that if He longed to reach it, it was not merely that He might pass it, but that He might then attain that end beyond. All the concern, therefore, which He once felt to reach the cross is now transferred to the accomplishment of that end for which He reached it. All the Divine solicitude which once bore Him on to the cross is now impelling Him forwards to that end; and the language of all His conduct concerning it is, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Are we asked to prove this? Besides the nature and necessity of the case, to which we have just adverted, we might remind you of the doctrines and disclosures of Scripture on the subject.

1. Would you admit that a person discovered urgency for an object if he lost not a moment in arranging for its attainment? No sooner had the Saviour emerged from the tomb

than He summoned His disciples, and began to prepare them for their mission to the ends of the earth.

2. Does a person discover intense concern for an object, if he consecrates all his power to its attainment? The Saviour did this. As soon as He could say in His mediatorial capacity, "All power is mine," He added, "Go preach the Gospel to every creature," intimating that the only use He proposes to make of all power is to promote the ends for which He died. As if, having entered the spacious treasury of God, and taken account of all its riches—having reckoned up all the orders of heavenly beings, and marked their respective capacities for His service—having looked down through all the ages of time, counted its generations, and numbered its events, He had said,

"All these shall ultimately be harmonized, combined, and made contributory to the one object of human salvation. Vast as is the space they occupy, there is not a point in all that space which shall not in some way be impressed with the signs of their activity—a theatre less ample would not be adequate to the development of my plan. Diversified as are the influences they are calculated to exert, and even hostile as many of them are to my purpose, there is not one of them all which *cannot* and which *shall not* yield its proportion of willing or unwilling service. And distant as is the period when the last soul shall be saved, there shall not be a moment through the whole of the mighty interval in which all these countless and far-reaching agencies shall not be gradually contracting their sphere of operation, concentrating their power, and bringing their whole influence to bear more directly and fully on that grand consummation. All power is mine in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and preach the gospel."

3. Does a person discover intense concern for an object if he not only consecrates all his own power to it, but if the first use which he makes of that power be to secure and employ the agency of others? In the loftiest sense, the

Saviour did this. The first agency which He engaged after He ascended the mediatorial throne was that of the Holy Spirit—the great agent of the universe. And the express, the only object of *His* coming was, *not* to speak of Himself but of Christ—to testify of Christ—to glorify Christ—to convince the world of sin, and convert it to Christ.

Not more entirely did the Saviour devote and set Himself apart to the work of human salvation than the Spirit came and set *Himself* apart to glorify Christ, by promoting the ends for which He died.

And what must be *His* estimate of the work of Christ, that He should thus, in a sense, be content to be silent concerning Himself, in order that the world might resound with nothing but the claims of Christ—to conceal His own splendour, that the eye of the world might rest undisturbed on Christ alone! And what urgency does it stamp on the accomplishment of those ends, that *His* agency should be engaged to secure them; and that, till they are secured, that agency should, in effect, be engaged in nothing else—be exclusively devoted to this!

4. Does a person discover intense concern for an object, if he commands and lays under tribute the instrumentality of every one belonging to him for its attainment? The Saviour has done this. Not one of all His followers is allowed to claim exemption. "He that is not with me," saith Christ, and during every moment in which he is not with me, "is against me."

Lax views on this subject are the origin of much of that inferior piety by which the Church is enfeebled, and its usefulness impaired. Thousands of professing Christians seem to proceed on the supposition, that there is a sense in which they are still partially their own—that there are considerable portions of time in which they are at perfect liberty to relax and stand at ease—that, at such times, their conduct is quite neutral in its influence—that anything short of positive hostility against Christ is to be regarded as so

much service done for Him. Now, were this supposition as true as it is false—were it quite possible for the Christian to withhold from Christ a portion of his resources, without rendering by such an act the least advantage to the foe, it would still be highly inconsistent and unjust. For, at the very moment we are relaxing in His service, ten thousand of His agencies are at work for us. At the moment we are self-indulging, we are doing it with His money, in His time, at His expense. But, when we remember that every particle of influence withheld from Christ is so much employed against Him—that neutrality here is impossible—the consequences are alarming.

Christians, could you ascend some mount of vision, whence you could look down upon all the consequences of your conduct, you would see that, at the moment when you thought yourself most perfectly detached from all around you, there is a sense in which you were then standing in the centre of the universe with lines of relation and influence drawn from yourselves to every one of the congregated myriads; you would see that often, when you thought your character most unobserved and at rest, it was giving out moral influences without intermission—that the *moment* they ceased to be good, they began to be evil—that, however apparently unimportant, they have ever since been swelling that tide of evil by which myriads are borne on to perdition; you would see that the world is the scene of a moral conflict—that in that conflict you hold an appointed post—that at that post everything you possess is a weapon of war—that never have you ceased to wield them either for evil or for good; for the moment in which you thought you were only pausing, a shout of joy ran through the ranks of the invisible foe, who beheld in that pause a proof of your weakness, and the sign and means of their own strength—so that when you thought you were only doing nothing for Christ, they hailed you as an accession to their own ranks, acting against Him; and thus you would see why it was that Meroz was cursed because

they came *not* out to the help of the Lord, and why it is that, in the final judgment, those that did nothing will find themselves standing side by side with them that did evil, and involved in the same condemnation.

Oh, precious, precious influence, each grain of which exceeds the value of the globe! Well might our Lord be jealous for every particle, since there are but two treasuries in the universe, one for Him and the other for Satan, so that every grain withheld from His falls into and enriches the other. And well may the Christian regard himself with all the sacredness of a temple, since he cannot yield himself to any other claimant than Christ, even for a moment, without yielding himself during that moment to a hostile party; so that, in truth, his only escape from partial hostility to Christ is that of unreserved devotedness to His service.

5. But speak we of the fact that Christ has thus laid all the members of His Church under solemn obligation, as a proof of His unabated solicitude for human salvation; from the concluding book of Scripture, the Book of the Revelation, there is reason to believe that he has engaged the agency of every angel in heaven for the same object. Nay, there is reason to conclude that they are not only engaged, but that, from the moment they comprehended the great design of His death, they themselves have felt straitened till it be accomplished—that in this respect they perfectly sympathize with Christ—that when the Gospel was first proclaimed, they felt a holy impatience to see it taken to the ends of the earth—possibly they expected, that wherever it was taken it would triumph—that such a message of mercy could not be rejected. There is reason to believe that they have never yet witnessed the apathy of the Church in diffusing the Gospel without experiencing a feeling which answers to profound disappointment and regret—that they never behold its successful propagation without hailing the event as an addition to their own happiness—that they never hear it proclaimed to a people without waiting and watching with

holy anxiety to see the result—and that, no sooner does the first sigh escape the penitent sinner, and the first tear drop, than joy thrills through all their principalities and powers—and that one reason why they rejoice in his conversion is, that they behold in him another agent for carrying on the great designs of the Saviour's death. There is reason to believe that so deeply do they sympathize with Christ their Lord in *His* undiminished solicitude for human salvation, that not only is each angel at his post as an agent of Christ, and each vial of judgment ready to be discharged on the enemies of His Gospel, and each harp tuned for the celebration of its final triumph—but that, were the exchange permitted, gladly would they resign, for a while, their heavenly seats to us, that they might discharge our trust, wield our influence, and win the honours which are offered to us in drawing men to Christ.

6. But if all this may be inferred from the concluding book of Scripture, what may we learn from the concluding paragraph—the postscript of the Bible?—what but the concern of Christ to fill the entire Church in heaven and earth with His own solicitude for human salvation—"The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Here is the summing-up of all His arrangements and commands for the diffusion of the Gospel. If all the invitations of mercy could be condensed and uttered in a single word, that word would be, *come*. Having opened the fountain of eternal life in the midst of the desert world, the Spirit—the Church—every member of that Church—every power of every member, even if he can only utter the exclamation "come"—are all to be combined and devoted to the grand object of inviting the perishing world to partake. Every one that hears the call is to transmit it further still—there is no point at which it may stop—a chain of living voices is to be carried round the globe in every direction—till the

earth grows vocal with the sound of the Church inviting men to Christ.

7. But if all this urgency is implied in the last *book*, and expressed in the last *paragraph* of Scripture, what shall we say of the last sentence which the Saviour uttered, "Behold, I come *quickly*"? Does it not imply that there is not a moment to be lost? Is it not meant to stimulate the lingering progress of the Church into urgent activity? Does it not intimate that the eye of Him who uttered it is already fixed intently on the goal, and that He counts each moment lost which does not bring us nearer to it? Yes; as if we had only a single word to utter, and only a moment in which to utter it, He would have us to pour into the utterance of it all the impassioned earnestness of which we are capable—assuring us that the Spirit himself would pour into it also His own infinite energy—that a Church so devoted would carry along with it all the sympathies of the holy universe.

8. "But why this continued solicitude on the part of Christ?" it may be asked. "Has not His great sacrifice been not only offered, but accepted? and is He not now exalted in consequence to the right hand of God?" Yes; but His concern relates now to the proclamation of His atoning sacrifice throughout the world, and to the salvation of those who rely on it. Having provided the *means* of salvation, He is now for pressing on to the *end*. And hence He prays even in heaven. Though at the right hand of God, He ever liveth, even there, to make intercession. While all heaven is occupied in the celebration of His praise, He is occupied in still urging on the great object for which He died. "But is He not invested with power, and seated on a throne?" Yes, says the apostle, but even there He is "henceforth *expecting*" —from the moment He ascended it, He has been *waiting for—expecting—looking on* with intense desire to the time when all His foes shall be at His feet—all His friends at His side—all the ends of His death fulfilled—and the only use

which He makes of His power meanwhile is to urge and hasten on the grand consummation.

## IV.

Brethren, what, fourthly, should be the practical application of this subject? If the devotedness of Christ to the salvation of man was such that He not only agonized *on* the cross, but even agonized *for* it, and if His Divine solicitude be still undiminished—then, surely, the Christian cannot render less than *entire devotedness to the same object.* Accordingly, the Saviour claims every Christian here for Himself. From the moment He saw the travail of His soul accomplished in you, your duty became definite, imperative, one. If every other member of the human family were abandoned to live without control—if the sun itself were left to wander at random through infinite space—your course would still be minutely prescribed. As if you alone held the great secret of the cross, and were consequently the most important being on the face of the earth, your every moment is charged with an appointed duty. As if you had been "made alive from the dead;" yes, not merely as if you had been called out of nothingness into existence, not merely as if you had been selected and sent down from the ranks of the blessed above, but with stronger motives still—as if your guilty soul had been recalled from perdition, where the undying worm had found you and where the unquenchable flame had enwrapped you, and your dissolved body had been recalled from the dust of death—and as if you had "risen together with Christ," had literally come out of the tomb with Christ, and had received life and salvation together at the mouth of the sepulchre at the hand of Christ—all your new-found powers are to be held by you as a precious trust for the service of Christ. As if you had come forth from the sepulchre at first with life only—and as if your reason, affections, knowledge, speech, property, had then been returned to you separately and in succession, with

a distinct intimation accompanying each that you received it back for Christ—you are to look on yourself henceforth as a part of the cross, as taken up into the great designs of Christ, as bound for life and death in His plans of mercy. Your character is to be a reproduction of the character of Christ. The disinterestedness which appeared in Christ is to reappear in you. The tenderness of Christ—his untold solicitude for human souls—is to live over again in your tones of entreaty, your wrestling prayers for their salvation. The blood of the cross itself is, in a sense, to stream forth again in your tears of anguish, your voluntary and vicarious self-sacrifice to draw men to Christ. And if tempted to lend but a particle of your influence to any other claimant than Christ, your reply is at hand—"I am not my own"—I am Christ's. He has put it out of my power to give Him *more* than belongs to Him, for He has purchased and challenges the whole through every moment of time—and out of my will to give Him *less*, for if I know any grief, it is that my all should so inadequately express my sense of obligation, and so feebly promote those great designs on the accomplishment of which His heart is so intensely set.

2. But if we thus sympathize with Christ, we shall see the importance of everything calculated to promote the object of His solicitude. Viewed in connexion with these objects, nothing we do is insignificant—an act apparently trivial, a word, a look, acquires a character of infinite moment. You may sometimes have wondered at the importance attached in Scripture to things of apparently small account. A cup of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, is to receive the plaudits of the universe. A poor widow casts in two mites into the temple treasury; and if the Saviour had not graciously noticed it, man would have accounted it the merest trifle. But His noticing the act did not *make* it important. He noticed it because it *was* important. It would have been quite *as* important had He never so noticed it. And one of His objects in noticing it

was to teach us this—to assure us that every such act, whether noticed or not on earth, is both noticed and *recorded* in heaven—that He receives it as a tribute of affection to Himself—accounts Himself enriched by it—and the cause for which He died intentionally and therefore really promoted. One of His messengers goes forth to preach the Gospel, and obtains an audience; "And I say unto you," saith Christ, "in receiving him, they have received me, and in receiving me, they have received Him that sent me." See what a train of sublime consequences the sincere reception of the Gospel draws after it! the reception of Christ in all His mediatorial glory, and of the Father in all His infinite benignity and love!—consequences, therefore, which ask infinity and eternity for the full expansion of their results.

See, too, what a train of results is involved in an event like that which has now assembled us together! Brethren, if there be any proportion between events on earth and the degree of emotion which they excite in heaven, the dedication of a house to the great purposes of the Cross must excite a sensation of delight through all the ranks of the blessed. And could we bear to think that it did not? Could we bear to think that we were here unnoticed by all but human eyes—that we were isolated, cut off from all the sympathies of the blessed—that *nothing* was known in heaven of what is now transacting here? And can they know it without sympathizing with it? No; as it harmonizes with the great object of the Saviour's solicitude, it attracts their regards, and secures their intense desires for success. When the Jewish temple was on the eve of destruction, it is said that mysterious voices were heard to say, "Let us go hence, let us go hence;" and that ominous sounds of departure were heard. But when a house of God is first opened, and devoted to the ministry of the Gospel, are there not sounds which reach the ear of faith, and say, "Let us enter, let us enter and take possession"? And

patriarchs enter, followed by a long succession of prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and righteous men—they enter to testify afresh, through the ministry of the Gospel, of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. But above them all a voice is heard announcing, "In receiving my Gospel ye have received me, and still more, ye have received Him that sent me." "Yes," saith God, "this is *my* rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." And having entered, His train filleth the temple. Brethren, compared with the occasion which has now brought us together, how insignificant, as viewed from heaven, is the march of an army or the revolution of an empire! For while that is purely a human affair, except as far as God chooses to turn it to account and to press it into His service, this involves everything dear to the heart of God—purposes which from eternity have been revolved in His mind—the salvation of souls over which He is yearning—the accomplishment of objects to which every perfection of His nature is pledged, and concerning which the Saviour is straitened till they are fulfilled.

3. But this reminds us, next, that if we truly sympathize with Christ, we shall not be satisfied with merely providing the means of usefulness, or with putting them into action—we shall be deeply anxious to see the *end* of all such means accomplished. The Saviour was not only straitened till He had reached the cross—till He had provided salvation; all the solicitude which He then felt for the means, He now feels for the *end*. And is not this the great difference between His merely *nominal* and His *devoted* servants—that while the former are content with languidly using the outward means, the latter are in solicitude to realize the end? In the one case, the parent, for instance, takes his child to the house of God, but never yearns for its conversion; the Sunday-school teacher instructs his pupils in the Bible, but never prays that it may be made the power of God to their salvation, the minister or missionary preaches the Gospel,

but does not long for the souls of his hearers. But in the other case, the parent, the teacher, the minister, and the missionary sympathize with Christ; and hence they "beseech men"—they beseech God—they travail in birth again till Christ be formed in those whose welfare they seek.

4. But this subject reminds us, brethren, finally, that if we truly sympathize with Christ, we shall be conscious of deep humiliation at our past apathy, and of holy impatience and concern to see the designs of His death realized in the salvation of our fellow-men. For, alas, those ends, as far as they have depended on human instrumentality, are still unrealized. The scenes of misery which moved and melted His heart still exist—the guilt which He came to expiate—the ignorance of God, and the dishonour cast upon His name, which He came to remedy—the salvation of the world—every object which lay *beyond* the cross, and which induced Him to urge on His progress to the cross, still remains appealing to His compassion, and filling Him with concern. And why? Oh, Church unworthy of such a Saviour! Having put all the properties and powers of His own nature into requisition for the redemption of man, He looked to His people to put all their resources into requisition for making that redemption known; but the only strait, comparatively speaking, which they have felt has been how to escape the duty, or entirely to evade the obligation. And still the guilt and wretchedness of the world lie before Him, and fill Him with concern. But who feels with Him? who sees with His eyes? who is agonized at the sight? No; if He looks at the world, and is affected with the spectacle of its misery, is His concern likely to be allayed by directing His eye to the Church? is not a large portion of it, at least, in a state in which it is difficult to say whether the Church or the world is most calculated to excite his concern? Oh, Church unworthy of such a Saviour! And was it for this that He bore down, by a course of unexampled devotedness, the greatest obstacles in the universe—made His way from

heaven, through the ranks of hell, into the midst of the world, and direct to a cross? was it for this He effected an unbroken descent from heights of glory no wing can scale, to depths of humiliation no line can fathom? and was it for this He even agonized to reach it? Brethren, we *cannot* truly sympathize with Christ, without feeling the deepest humiliation at our past apathy, and cherishing a holy impatience and concern to see the design of His death realized in the recovery of men to God.

And ask we for motives to this? Is it nothing that Christ expects it? Is it nothing that He has turned His whole self into a sacrifice, compared with which nothing else deserves the name? and that He has devolved it on us to multiply as far as we can the copies of His character in our own? But how can a supine, self-indulging Christianity represent a self-denying, self-sacrificing Christ? How can the world learn His benevolence from our selfishness? How can it know that He was in anguish for its redemption unless we are seen in anguish for its conversion?

Is it nothing, again, that others have felt this? Yes; the duty is not only obligatory but practicable, for others have felt it. They looked through their tears from the world to the cross, and from the cross to the world again, till they "thus judged, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them, and rose again"—they judged that, instead of living as if they were under little or no obligation to Him, they should henceforth act as if the duty of living to Him were the only obligation they were under—and that the best way of doing that would be by conveying the knowledge of His redemption to others, and thus working out the grand purposes of His atoning death. The love of Christ *constrained* them, bore them onwards, made them feel straitened to see those purposes accomplished. And what was there in all this which is not obligatory on us of the present day? what

had the Saviour done for them, which He has not equalled and even exceeded for us?

And should it not urge our languid movements into zealous activity when we reflect that "the time is short"? Was there an hour appointed for the sacrifice of Christ, and did He, as He approached it, burn for its arrival? Yes; so much was depending on that short hour, that he was filled with anguish till it had passed. And is it true that a day is appointed, beyond which there shall not be another moment through all eternity for extending His further saving grace? Yes; and it may be that we have reached the evening of that day—that we have entered on its closing hours. Can we think, then, how much remains to be yet accomplished—what continents of darkness to be lighted up—what moral revolutions to be effected—and can we be content to do less than the utmost in our power to effect them? can we feel less than *straitened* till the grand consummation is achieved?

5. And achieved it shall be. How should the prospect quicken our activity and inflame our desire! To think that the scene of the Saviour's humiliation shall be the scene of His ultimate triumph—that that triumph will be such, that even *He* will deem it an ample compensation for all His sufferings and straits—to think of His leading a recovered and sanctified world into the presence of the Father, as the fruit of His mediation—and of His there unveiling to the eyes of that adoring multitude the vindicated, illustrated, unapproachable glory of God! If the recovery of a single sinner throws all heaven into ecstasy, what will be the transports of that final scene in which shall be celebrated the recovery of a world? If the homage of *heaven* brings Him honour, what will the *salvation* of *earth* do? *There* His glory has never been obscured; here it has suffered a long and disastrous eclipse. When, therefore, it shall again burst forth with unclouded lustre, well may the blessed, with unwonted emphasis, exclaim, "Even *earth*, the whole earth is full of His glory!" When, in defiance of all the hostility

of hell, and all the mighty depravity of man, the empire of grace shall be everywhere triumphant, what honours will be recovered to the blessed God of which He has long been defrauded! When all things shall be sacred to His name—all hearts reflecting His image—how will the earth echo it to heaven, and heaven re-echo it back again—that even *here*, at length, "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth"—that even "the kingdoms of *this* world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ!" And when it shall be seen distinctly that, from first to last, the recovery of the world was entirely owing, through every stage and every step, to His boundless grace, what ascriptions of honour will the admiring universe pour forth, like the sound of many waters, to God and to the Lamb!

Now, *that* is the scene on which the eye of Christ is fixed —that is the goal at which he is aiming. And can we know that he has constituted His Church expressly to promote it, and that He is looking to every member of that Church, to every Christian present, to hasten its arrival, without feeling ourselves straitened till it be accomplished? Oh, talk not of other claims and other causes. Here is a cause on which all the treasures of eternity have been expended; all creation is groaning and travailing in pain together for want of it; even now, all the agencies of Providence are urged into unusual activity to hasten it on, and all the voices in heaven and earth are calling upon you to take part in it. Affected by its magnitude and importance—moved by the example of Him whose cause it is—subdued by His love—sympathizing with Him in the travail of His soul for its completion, you will feel that to throw less than all your energy into it would be an insult to all the momentous interests which it involves. Not only, therefore, will you task your own powers in its behalf—you will task them partly in an earnest endeavour to move heaven and earth to join you.

# SERMON XI.

## CHRIST WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

LUKE xix. 41, 42—"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

OFTEN had He approached Jerusalem before by the same road, and gazed on it from the same spot, and never, we may suppose, had He looked on it but with emotions of unutterable concern: for, oh! Jerusalem was endeared to Him by ties unimagined by man. Now, however, He was approaching it for the last time; and He paused to take a final look. He knew that His entrance within its gates would be the signal for filling up the measure of its guilt; and, therefore, He lingered a moment as if to respite its doom—the Sun of Righteousness lingered a moment on Mount Olivet, as if to prolong for it that day of grace made by His own immediate beams. He had before asked for it "another year," that He might make on it fresh experiments of mercy; and now He graciously vouchsafed to it another moment. And as He stood and gazed on it, His mind filled with affecting recollections of the *past*, the *future* rose to His prophetic eye, crowded with scenes of guilt and woe; while both the past and the future were aggravated by the afflicting thought that all His generous efforts to save it were defeated, and would only serve to enhance its doom.

1. His comprehensive mind reverted to the *past;* He remembered the days of old, when Israel was holiness to the

Lord. He could not forget that Judea had for ages been the ark of religion, where the knowledge of Jehovah had been preserved and cherished, when lost by all the world besides—that it was filled with the mementoes of prophets and miracles—that it had been the birthplace of men of whom the world was not worthy—that its paths had been trodden by angels' feet—that its dust was hallowed, its very soil sacred to God. He thought of the temple, where devotion had for so many ages felt itself nearer heaven—where the bleeding sacrifice had daily testified of human guilt and of Divine placability—where successive generations had communed with God from off the mercy-seat, and multitudes had found the gate of heaven. But these recollections, pleasing in themselves, were embittered by the remembrance of the guilt they necessarily recalled—ages of accumulated guilt. It could not be that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem. It was saturated with "the blood of all the prophets, down to the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar." And now He knew that it was thirsting for His own blood. For more than a thousand years, it had enjoyed the peculiar regards of heaven; yet, with all His compassion for it in lively exercise, the benevolent Jesus could not but see that it was the grave of hope, the sepulchre of all piety.

For three years now, He himself had come, seeking fruit and finding none. During that period, His preaching and miracles had but this one object—the instruction and salvation of its thankless and disobedient people. How solemnly had He warned them, how graciously invited them, how anxiously *laboured* to convince them that He *was* the hope of Israel, the promised Messiah! For them He had toiled, and travelled, and interceded, and spent Himself in self-consuming privations. For their sakes He had made himself of no reputation, and had taken on Him the form of a servant. When driven from Jerusalem by persecution, exiled by bitter hate, He carried their welfare with Him in His heart; and

soon He returned to them again with a kindness which seemed increased by their ingratitude. They formed the chief object of His tenderest solicitude, the essence of His daily thought. For them every pulse of His heart had beaten; and for them that heart was ready to pour forth its vital blood. He had done everything that could be done for their welfare consistently with His own perfections, and with the liberty of accountable creatures—everything, but in vain. On them the object of His mission seemed entirely lost. He knew that at that moment they were passing His destruction into a law. He looked down on the guilty city, and, behold, it resembled a vast caldron filled and fermenting with all infernal passions, of which He was to be the devoted victim.

2. But with the self-denying love of a patriot and the grace of a Saviour, He looked beyond the spectacle of *His own* sufferings, and fixed His eye upon theirs—He could look at them only through an atmosphere of compassion. And, oh, what an appeal to His pity was there! He penetrated the *future*, and beheld it all. Clouds of wrath were gathering over Jerusalem from every quarter of heaven, fraught with materials of destruction such as none but a Divine hand could collect; His own blood, by which He had graciously meant to wash their guilt away, calling, with a voice not to be denied, for the ministers of justice to arm; all things, on earth and in heaven, mustering and marshalling for their doom. He looked again—and, lo, the city, *His* city, was beleaguered and lost—Jerusalem lay bleeding at His feet—the harpy nations had taken their prey—her dwellings of holiness were laid waste—and the sound of her expiring lament, drowning even the voice of justice itself, pierced His heart, and drew from Him words in which all His soul came forth—"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

3. The exclamation, regarded as a sentence, is broken and incomplete; but who does not see that it is, in effect, elo-

quently completed by the tears which break it—tears which are the natural language of compassion, and which express its intenseness beyond all words? But He not only thought of the *past*, and surveyed the *future*—He evidently glanced also at a pleasing picture of what the *present* might have been; and then the *break* in the sentence is to be regarded as filled up with a silent reflection on what would have been the happy results had Jerusalem accepted His mission. "If thou hadst known! oh, if thou hadst! then happy, happy—but, alas, it is only an unsubstantial vision." His lingering contemplation of the same blessed possibility is apparent also in His subsequent exclamation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Had the nation appreciated His character, had it sympathized with His mission, how different, we may suppose, His conduct would have been, and how changed the history of His earthly life. The Jewish economy might have died a glorious death, full of days, and full of honours. Instead of entering the temple to denounce and to scourge, He might have gone to explain and apply to Himself its ancient rites; to make known the termination of its service; and to pronounce its funeral eulogium in the hearing of the great congregation. Instead of being hated, persecuted, and ignominiously put to death, as the victim of malice—He might have assembled the tribes by proclamation—have lifted up His voice, and explained to their breathless attention the doctrine of the atonement—have opened their understanding, and disclosed the amazing fact, that the principle of vicarious suffering, which ran through the whole of their economy, was now to terminate and triumph in His own piacular death for man:—and then, amidst the tears and sympathies of the world, He might have ascended Calvary, He might have ascended the altar of sacrifice itself—and there, as our Substitute, He might have been visibly smitten by the

immediate sword of justice; while angels, bending over the mysterious scene, would have pointed each other to His blood, and said, "Behold, how he loved them!" Instead of retiring into Galilee when He arose from the dead, He might have shewn Himself openly to all the people; He might once more have entered the temple, where "Moses and Elias," as the representatives of the Jewish Church might have publicly resigned into His hands the trust which that Church had held for the human race; and then, investing Him with the insignia of prophet, priest, and king, might have hailed Him as the hope of Israel, and the surety of the world! "O that his people had hearkened unto him, and Israel had walked in his ways!"

It is true, the contrary was foreseen; every step He took was calculated and arranged on the distinct foresight of His rejection; the wickedness of His enemies was not only foreseen, it was made use of—it was interwoven into the texture of the Divine plans concerning Him. But His rejection was *necessitated* only by their own depravity. Had their blinding unbelief permitted them to "know him, they could not have crucified the Lord of glory." The morn of mercy would have arisen cloudless on the world. He would have made the temple the cradle of Christianity—the rendezvous of piety to all nations—the sanctuary of the world. Jerusalem should have arisen as a stately palm, towering to heaven, and seen to the ends of the earth—distilling balm for the healing of the nations, and wafting its fragrance as incense through the skies. Religion should have built her palaces in its shadow—it should have been the joy of the whole earth.

How often would He have done this, and more than this, for His beloved Jerusalem; gathering her children under His fostering care, and making her the abode of heavenly glory! But, alas! this was only a vision—as the name *Jerusalem* imports—*a vision of peace;* and now that vision was hid from *her* eyes, and had vanished from *His*. He would have turned the vision into reality—but she would not—she thrust Him from her. Painful indeed is the situation of the patriot

who is condemned to watch the exhausted struggles of his country—to behold its liberties and powers one by one expire, till it lies prostrate in corruption, and trodden under foot of the nations. But here was more than a patriot called to mourn over the desolation of his land, and to witness the frustration of his plans for saving it: here was the Friend of sinners, the Lover of human souls, called to contemplate the spiritual perdition of a whole land, and that land the immediate scene of His godlike labours. He could not fail to be deeply affected by the prospect of its *temporal* sufferings; but what were they compared with its impending *spiritual* fate! He knew the whole history of sin—He had seen it in its awful origin, expelling the angels from heaven, and preparing for them a hell—His comprehensive mind had all the endless consequences of sin present to His view. And knowing as He did the awful results of the least sin, what must His emotions of grief and compassion have been, at the sight of a whole nation of human beings, for whose welfare, at any moment, he was ready to become a curse, destroyed by the vials of Almighty displeasure—perishing under a charge of guilt, only inferior in aggravation to the guilt of the angels who kept not their first estate! His benevolent nature recoiled at the idea;—He felt as if He could not give them up—could not see them consigned to such irretrievable ruin; as if, even now, it was not too late to save them; as if He could almost have saved them even against their wills. We might have supposed that a consideration of their continued aggravated guilt had drained all pity from His nature; but at the sight of that coming woe, a new fountain of compassion opens in His heart, and pours itself forth in an unexampled gush of sympathy; at the prospect of that dreadful scene—that type of the terrors of the judgment day—His whole nature dissolves into compassion; the surrounding multitude are shouting hosanna, and hailing His entrance into the devoted city—but He heeds it not: His own cross is preparing—but He thinks not of it—He abandons Himself to sympathy—He

can only utter an exclamation in which He pours forth the tears of His heart, "O Jerusalem, oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Pitiable, indeed, must be the state of that mind which can find itself at ease to debate a question of metaphysical divinity in the presence of the Redeemer's tears. Yet there are men whose creed has no place even for His sacred grief; who are actually annoyed at these tears wept over perishing sinners, regarding them as at heterodox variance with the Divine decrees; who frown at this precious distilment of infinite love as inconsistent with *their* views of Divine inflexibility. There are those who would rather these tears had never been shed, or that the record of this burst of Divine compassion should be expunged from the sacred page, than that it should remain there as an obstacle to their logical views of the Divine purposes. But we linger over it with delight—we love to remain within the softening influence, the hallowed contagion, of the Redeemer's tears—we bless Him for them—we regard the melting scene as only inferior in pathos, in tender and solemn grandeur, to Calvary itself.

The compassionate exclamation of Jesus, on this occasion, intimates that the salvation of the Jews would have been far more agreeable to His benevolent nature than their destruction—that, notwithstanding this, there were sufficient reasons why His *omnipotence* should not interpose to prevent that destruction—that, in one and the same act, justice, awful and unbending justice, may denounce destruction against the sinner, while benevolence sympathizes in his misery, even to tears. When Jesus afterwards turned to the mourning daughters of Jerusalem, as they followed Him to Calvary, and said, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children," He sought by that admonition to impress them with the magnitude of the calamity which awaited them—a calamity so great as to require their undivided grief—a calamity so pregnant with woe, that had all the tears

shed from the creation been reserved for that event, had all the universe joined and aided them in the mighty grief, it would not have equalled the greatness of the occasion. But His own tears should affect us more deeply with the greatness of the calamity than the sight of all creation in tears To think that Jesus wept—that tears fell from His eyes, the eyes of incarnate perfection—how great must have been the calamity which occasioned them—the calamity of souls lost —immortal natures perishing under the frown of God! And He would encourage us to infer that His nature is still the same—that, making the necessary allowance for the difference between His earthly and His heavenly state, His nature is still the same—that no sinner perishes unpitied, unlamented. He would have the ministers of His Gospel to mingle their appeals and warnings with tears—and to assure the impenitent that if they finally perish, they descend into perdition bathed in the tears of His Divine compassion.

## II.

From this amplification and general interpretation of the text, let us proceed, next, to consider its particular bearing on ourselves. Let us not suppose that it relates exclusively to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were its immediate objects. As an *event*, the exclamation of Christ, and the tears mingled with it, related to the inhabitants of that guilty city; as a *record*, it is meant for us. By giving to it a place in the evangelical narrative, the Son of God is saying, in effect, to the preachers of His Gospel, "Perpetuate the memory of that scene—repeat it in the hearing of your fellow-men—tell them that when My ancient people despised and rejected Me, they yet had My tears—tell them that after all the wrongs I had received, when I came near, and beheld the city, I wept over it, and said, 'Oh! that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes'—tell them this—it will give pathos and power to your

calls to repentance in My name—it will give hope to the penitent, by affording him an insight into the compassion of My heart—and many, many will bless the hour when first they heard that I wept over Jerusalem."

And think, my friends, there is a sense in which the history of Christ among the Jews may be regarded as a typic or prophetic representation of the reception His Gospel would meet with in every land and every place it might visit. Human nature still numbers among its members its Scribes and its Pharisees, though under different names; still retains its proud and persecuting bigots, its hypocritical and inconsistent pretenders to religion, its impenetrable and worldly-minded, its wayward and unstable multitudes—all its original elements of character unchanged. And as Jerusalem was only an epitome of the world, so the Gospel is an epitome of the character of Christ; consequently, name what event you will in the history of Christ, the counterpart of that event is to be found among ourselves. The history of the Gospel among a people is but the life of Jesus repeated over again; repeated, too, not with the omission of its more tragic parts—but, alas! with a most minute and faithful repetition of all its most affecting details. Could we learn its history in this place—among those who have worshipped within these walls—we should find that no part of the original tragedy had been omitted through want of persons to sustain its most revolting parts. We should see His rejection enacted again—we should see Him betrayed for money—deserted by His professed disciples—delivered into the hands of His enemies—derided and spit upon; we should behold Him crowned with thorns—and clothed with the mock purple—and led away to be crucified; yea, to complete the representation, we should behold "the Son of God crucified afresh, and put to an open shame."

Now, if it be so—if the history of the Gospel among a people be only the history of Christ among the Jews revived and enacted again, we cannot suppose that an incident so

important as that in the text will be omitted. The counterpart of *that* is sure to be found in the history of every Christian congregation. That tender, touching scene was only a rehearsal of what would take place wherever the Gospel came—of what has been repeated here times without number—of what is transpiring here this evening, at this moment. Come, then, my friends, give activity to your thoughts—imagine, realize the scene—apply it to yourselves. Let this assembly represent Jerusalem; how often has Jesus of Nazareth been here—here with messages of mercy, offers of salvation, beseeching you to be reconciled to God! Some of you—a small number—have been prevailed on to take up your cross, and to follow Him. But for the great majority—alas! for the wavering, the insensibility, the unbelief, the unsubdued though concealed enmity of your hearts! But He has drawn near to you again this evening—and as He came, like the multitude which met Him on His approach to Jerusalem, you sang, "Hosannah, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." But as you sang, there was no joy in His countenance, no triumph in His eyes, respecting you. How could there be? He thought of the *past*—your past convictions sinned away—past impressions effaced—past opportunities and privileges all lost. He thought of the *future*—your sick chamber—your unavailing regrets—your last hour—your spirit disembodied, standing for judgment at the bar of God—and then the awful scenes beyond—all, all were present to His view. He marked how much of your day of grace is gone—saw, perhaps, that the shadows of evening are coming on—the last sands of the last hour running out—the voice of time about to sound the knell of departed hope, the loss of your soul. And as He took this comprehensive survey, whatever the eyes of others might look at, His eyes fixed, settled in an anxious, yearning, compassionate gaze on your souls. "And as He drew near and beheld you, He wept over you, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which

belong unto thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes!"

And shall these precious tears, and this gracious lamentation, be lost on you? May the Holy Spirit of Christ so prepare you to receive that brief personal application of the subject which now remains to be made, that you may be led to return Him tears for tears! Lift up a prayer to Him that this may be the case—that you may know this day of your visitation.

1. And, *first*, my friends, you are to mark that *there are things which pre-eminently belong to your peace.* You know this—that sin has ruined you, made you heirs of the bottomless pit—that there is a pardoning God, an almighty Saviour, a sanctifying Spirit—these are things so familiar to you, as belonging to your peace, that to enlarge on them now is quite unnecessary. You hear of them every Sabbath—you admit that, while other things may be necessary to your health, your worldly reputation, and ease, the knowledge of this is indispensable to your eternal wellbeing—that "it is for your life." God himself keeps up an intercourse with the world solely for the purpose of urging them upon you. And often, when He has been reminding you that they are vital to your peace, your own conscience has instantly replied, "*They are so*"—has instantly put its seal to the fact, and joined with God in attesting their infinite importance. You distinctly see that these Gospel truths are "the great things" of God—elements of happiness, means of salvation—that the withdrawment of them would be destruction—that the loss of one of them would be fatal to our hope—that if you are saved, it must be by receiving and acting on them. And it may be that for years there has been floating in your mind a vague intention that you will certainly at some time begin to regard them with the seriousness their importance deserves.

2. But while you are thus trifling with these momentous affairs, remember, *secondly*, the period allotted you for

attending to them is definite and brief—it is here called *your day.* It deserves this name, you will allow, *on account of the light it affords you to work out your salvation.* The Sun of Righteousness has arisen in your horizon, and how strong and cheering the beams which now fall on the path to heaven! What light has streamed in upon your conscience—how affluent you are made in means of grace—what facilities and helps are brought near to you—what favourable conjunctures are constantly occurring, and appearing to invite you to surrender to Christ! and how many around you are admonishing you, both by their voice and their example, to work while it is day.

But the period assigned you is a *day* especially on account of *its brevity, and the certainty of its termination.* It is made up of hours and minutes; and, like every other day, it hastens to its close. *Now,* while your pulse is beating—while the blood is circulating through your frame—the day of salvation is wearing away. *Now,* while the hand of time is silently counting out its moments—now, while you are thinking of to-morrow, and are projecting schemes of gain or pleasure—behold, *now,* your day of opportunity is fast advancing to a close. Your religious indifference does not stop it—your apathy does not check it in its flight. It is, at this moment, closing with multitudes—now, *now,* the things of their peace are hid from *their* eyes—never will they look on them more. Oh! that awful, that emphatic *now!* *Now* they are hid—a short time ago, a few hours ago, they were not hid—but *now* they are. Their day has closed, their sun is set—they have had it—they have lost it—and now they are in the act of passing into the presence of Him who gave it to them. A little space longer, and you will follow them. Yes, it will be only a rapid succession of hours and minutes, and you will have to look back—but upon what? You will have to look back, not merely on your day of salvation, which you are now neglecting, but upon that terrible moment when it closed—when you stood

at the bar of God—when He laid open the secrets of your life—when you heard His awful voice pronounce "*depart*" —the moment when you first began to date your woe.

3. And this calls you to reflect, *thirdly,* that should your day of opportunity close, and leave you unsaved, your guilt will be great, and your condition remediless. How can it be otherwise? You will, in that case, have forced your way to perdition through a region of salvation—you will have penetrated into the land of woe, while carrying a lamp lighted at the altar of heaven in your hand. You will have fallen into the jaws of destruction, by extricating yourself out of the grasp of Divine compassion. What a pitiable spectacle will you present! An intelligent and immortal being benighted at noonday—surrounding himself with thick darkness in the midst of the clearest light—stumbling into perdition, while yet it is broad day, the day of salvation. And not only so, not only lost *in spite* of all the means of recovery, but lost *by* them—turning that which was meant to be a savour of life into an element of condemnation—a Saviour present, and you yet lost—exhorted by Him, entreated, and yet lost—wept over, and yet lost—followed by Him, even to the mouth of the bottomless pit, and yet lost —followed by His tears while descending, going down into it, but yet lost!

4. Now, *fourthly,* this is a spectacle calling for the profoundest lamentation. Little as at present it may affect you, "it is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation." There is in it a mystery of guilt, which none but God can fathom —there is involved in it an eternity of sorrow. The period will come when you yourself will begin that sorrow; meanwhile, Jesus weeps, and He calls on all His people to join with Him in lamenting your forlorn condition. Christians, your Saviour calls on you to unite with Him in a lamentation, to mingle your tears with His over your perishing fellow-hearers—they are with you in the same seats, sitting by your side—but His tears tell you they are perishing. Join Him

in the grief—let Him not weep alone—it is a tender, solemn, mighty grief—if they *will* perish, let them not perish unlamented—if they *will* precipitate themselves into the gulf of perdition, follow them to the brink—let them have, to the last, your commiseration, your tears.

5. But, *fifthly*, let them behold in the tears of Jesus a proof of His unextinguished compassion for them, and an inducement to apply to Him at once for salvation. Say not, my friends, say not that your day of hope has closed in darkness. If you *really* fear it, we can assure you that there is hope for you in *that very fear*.

In order to rekindle and animate that hope, shall I remind you of the grace of the Saviour's conduct towards the guilty city—the grace which He shewed it, even after He had wept over it in the text, and had apparently abandoned it to its doom? Could you have supposed it? They had filled up the measure of their sins by shedding His blood—yet no sooner had He arisen from the dead, than "He commanded his disciples that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem.*" *Could tears* have washed away the crimson guilt of its inhabitants, they would now have needed no remission; for over them the Man of sorrows had dissolved into grief. Could kindness have melted or moved them, they would not now have needed an exhortation to repentance; for His last anguish on the cross included a pang of compassion for them—and for them He had saved His latest breath to pray, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Yet now, no sooner does He find Himself in a capacity to bless, than He exercises His prerogative in blessing *them*. We might almost as soon have expected that He would have sent His Gospel to be proclaimed over the mouth of perdition, as to Jerusalem, that hell of earth. At least, we should have expected to see it making the circuit of the earth, before it came there—to hear Him direct His disciples to wait till His immediate

enemies had descended to the grave—to visit Jerusalem last. But His thoughts are not as our thoughts—the course of His grace admits not of human calculation—He sends them to Jerusalem *first.* While the eyes of His enemies are yet gleaming with the fire of triumphant revenge, He commissions His apostles to hasten and open the charter of redemption within sight of Calvary; to let them know that, whatever they might have drawn from His heart, His love for them remains there still; to assure them there is one mode of inflicting on Him greater pain than even that of employing the cross—by obstinately refusing the blessings which His cross has procured.

Brethren, behold in this instance of unexampled grace an emblem of His compassionate concern for you. As if you had never trifled with His Gospel—never rejected His great salvation; as if He had forgotten all that has past—He this evening offers you repentance and the remission of sins. Will you not stretch forth the hand to receive them? He is at this moment standing before you with the hoarded love of eternity in His heart, offering to make *you* the heirs of all its wealth: nor is it in your power to grieve Him more than by disregarding the gracious overture. His eye at this moment is fixed on you—marking with gracious solicitude the emotions and fluctuations of your breast—watching what your decision is likely to be. Will you not return Him look for look—looks of contrition for his looks of love? He is uttering over you the lamentation, "Oh, that thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace!—but now," —shall He finish the sentence?—shall He add the awful remainder?—will you not entreat Him to pause—to forbear pronouncing them *hid from your eyes?* He *would* pause—He would lengthen out your day of grace.

Only do not any longer trifle—no longer delay. He fears nothing but your neglect—deprecates nothing but your inattention. He draws a line across your path, and demands that before you cross it you will come to a decision about

your soul's salvation. He now draws around you a small circle of time, and He demands, He entreats you, that this evening, before you come out of it, you will end your delay, and fall at His feet. And will you not yield to His entreaties —His tears? Before this night closes shall He not see you a suppliant for mercy—shall He not hear you saying, "Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned—save, Lord, or I perish"?

Oh, did you know the unutterable interest which He takes in every serious emotion of your soul—every symptom of penitence—you would flee to Him at once—you would give Him your heart! The first look you direct to Him will not escape His notice—the first step you take towards Him would bring Him more than a step towards you. All things are ready for your reception—He will meet your weakness with His almighty strength—your emptiness and poverty with His inexhaustable fulness. He would rejoice over you with singing; He would rest in His love; He would proclaim a jubilee in heaven, and call the universe to share His joy.

# SERMON XII.

## THE REDEEMER CONTEMPLATING HIS HOUR AS COME.

JOHN xii. 27—"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: BUT FOR THIS CAUSE CAME I UNTO THIS HOUR. Father, glorify thy name."

THERE is, I believe, a principle of universal application underlying this great utterance—the principle that there is an hour in the history of every intelligent being for which every previous hour of his life is a designed and continuous opportunity of preparation. And the practical application of the principle seems to be this: that the nature and responsibilities of this hour should be ascertained—that its coming should be provided for—that its conscious approach and arrival would bring with it a deep consecrating sense of responsibility—and that on our meeting and discharging the responsibilities of such an hour may be suspended consequences of unknown magnitude.

Now, this application is so appropriate, and so fruitful of suggestion for an occasion like the present, that I should proceed to it at once, had the principle itself come out in the ordinary teaching of Scripture—in the mere teaching of even Christ himself. But in this utterance, He is *acting* and suffering, rather than speaking. He has ceased to be the mere prophet or teacher, and has put on His priestly attire. He speaks not so much to earth as to heaven. His words are for the ear of God. It is as if He had gone back, in spirit, and for a moment, to the bosom of the Father. He

does not so much state the principle as embody it, suffer it, become it. His whole nature comes out in it like incense—a sacrificial exhalation. For us, who believe that He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"—that the unfolding of the whole scheme of mercy was made to depend on the foresight of that hour; for us, He has both made the principle, and made us for it—made it possible for us to take it up into our own nature, and to make our life an exposition of it.

## I.

Let us look first, then, at the deep unique significance of the language as it came from the lips of the Son of God.

1. It may be proper that we should glance, first, at the nature of this hour. *What* was about to take place? and why was it to occur *now?* If wisdom is distinguished from folly by acting on a plan—if "God only wise" acts according to a scheme in which every event has its permitted or its appointed time and place—and if there be some one event of transcendent interest, it is to be expected that for that event, pre-eminently, an hour will be appointed, which nothing will be permitted to hasten, nothing to delay. Such was the event about to take place. Man from the first had been placed under a system of righteous moral government; and from the first he had occupied himself chiefly in resisting that government, and in attempting to ward off the ruinous results. And now, "God manifest in the flesh" was about to set before the universe His own practical estimate of the reasonableness of that government, and, consequently, of the unreasonableness and wickedness of man's rebellion against it. But would not this be a display of love unparalleled? This was the very heart of the design. The vindication of the Divine government required the actual incarnation of a Divine person—required from Him a life of obedience, terminating in a crisis which we, who are standing outside the mystery, and see only some of the signs, call death, and of

which crucifixion was one of the signs—a crisis of the stress of which all sacrificial blood, and all martyr pangs in one, would only supply a hint—a crisis of which the unfathomable deeps could not be made visible or utterable—and, therefore, a crisis the endurance of which could only be accounted for as the outbursting of a long pent-up ocean of the love of God—love larger than all law, deeper than all misery—love that could fill up and overflow all laws and all hearts, and bear both on its tide into the presence of God. And the reason why this crisis had come *now*—at least, the one reason with which *we* have to do—was, that the state of the world itself had reached a crisis. Man himself was without strength—had exhausted his last expedient to do without God—and was fast collapsing—sinking into a condition in which the Divine remedy itself would be in danger of failure. "Known unto God are *all* his works from the beginning of the world." And now had arrived the time for God's great work. Time, from the beginning, had been set to it. The world had been spared for this hour. And now, as its last sands were running out, "For this cause," said Christ—to *meet* the crisis—"am I come to this hour."

2. Can we wonder then, next, at His awful and mysterious agitation in the near prospect of that hour, and of all that was dependent on it? On this profound subject I will only say, that even with my poor human conceptions of that hour, I can much more easily account to myself for the presence of such agitation, than I should have been able to account for its absence. Oh! who has not felt at one time or another the burden of an unfinished work? Who that has found himself pledged to a great undertaking, with weighty interests depending on its completion, formidable obstacles impeding that completion, and with unnumbered eyes fixed on him in ardent expectation—who, under such circumstances, has not known what is meant by anxious days and sleepless nights? Undertakings there have been so compli-

cated and weighty, that the parties concerned, though fully alive to their excellence, have gradually sunk under the responsibility, till reason has fled, or life itself has been pressed out. And yet all these together, when compared with the crisis of that hour, were only as a feather compared with the weight of the material universe.

But of all the anxious moments belonging to an unfinished work, who does not know that those endured on the eve of its completion are the most trying—that they grow in interest as they draw to an end, till the interest of the whole affair seems crowded and compressed into the last moment—every incident that occurs is interpreted into a token of success or of failure, and we feel incapacitated for everything—painfully straitened till it is accomplished? Was it to be wondered at, then, that our Lord should have felt this, now that the great work of redemption had reached the very eve of its completion? There was a time when that work was indefinitely distant; and even then He felt it in all its imposing magnitude. But that distance of thousands of years had gradually dwindled to centuries—and those centuries of years to tens—and those years to months—and those months to weeks—and those weeks to days—and those days to hours—till now, lifting up His eyes to heaven, he could say, "Father, the *hour* is come!"

3. What, then, was the grand consideration which induced Him to meet that hour in the face of all opposing motives? The fact that all the past had existed in order to it, and would be summed up in it, to the glory of God. For here we are taught the great truth, that our Lord's death is not to be viewed as an isolated event—standing apart from all that went before—but as the culmination and completion of the whole. And the subject of the awful soliloquy in the text is—Shall the great God-work, of which the cross would form the completion, be left incomplete, on account of the surprising intensity of that crisis? True, it would bring on the great conflict with the powers of evil. An invisible foe

already confronted Him. A crowded field, impalpable to human eye, was gathering around Him. He who had ever been saying, "Let there be light," was now to come into collision with him who had ever been saying, "Let there be darkness"—for "this was *their* hour, and the power of darkness." But for this cause, especially for this moral encounter, He is here; and shall all His previous triumphs end in present defeat? No, said He, as He girded himself for the onset—"Now shall the prince of this world be cast out: and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. Father, glorify thy name!" True, again, the act of obedience *now* required at His hands, exceeds every previous act—for it is "obedience unto death." But *for this cause* He has passed through all those previous acts, training Himself for it—"learning obedience by the things which He suffered"—qualifying Himself to become one vast capacity for suffering, an organized sacrifice; and shall He neutralize (thus reasoned His Divine spirit of self-sacrifice), shall He dissipate all the past, by declining the last, the crowning act? "Father, glorify thy name."

True, again, he was now standing face to face with the Cross. But when had He not been bearing a cross? From the moment of man's fall—the *moral* world, whatever the shape of the material—the *moral* world had never worn for Him any other form than that of a cross, and He had borne it. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," said He, "how often would I have gathered thee!" And how often, while bearing that moral cross, had he pointed the finger of prophecy to this hour. And *for this cause* had He now come to it, that He might openly, before all worlds, vindicate that government which man had occupied himself chiefly in resisting, vindicate it by rendering to it the homage of His own self-sacrifice. "Father, glorify thy name!"

And true, also, if man is ever to see the pang and the travail of infinite love, this last great sacrifice must be made. How else, tell me, in what other way, can I know the infini-

tude of His love? Mere pardon would not prove it. Easy, unbought, indulgent forgiveness may only prove that He thinks little of sin, of the authority of law, or of the claims of justice. But the time might come, the occasion might arise in the history of the universe, when He might cease to pardon thus. The wellbeing of His government might require Him to act up to the claims of law—to pardon only on the condition of an adequate moral compensation. But here such an hour has actually *come*—here, and now, the dreaded crisis *has* come—come as the condition of all forgiveness—and the question is, Will His love prove equal to it? Other sacrifices it may make, other tests and trials it may survive; but if it will not endure the stress of this, it is not, after all, unlimited—its limits are ascertained.

"What then," some one may say; "was there really an hour in which the redeeming purpose was in suspense? Was there a moment in which the great question of redemption trembled in the balance? What! and when the great work was so *near* completion?" What! I ask in reply; and do you forget that we are speaking of *sacrifice?* You surely do not suppose that *all* the reasons were on the side of making it. That would do away with the very idea of sacrifice. Do you remember *who* is to be the sacrifice? Do you remember that it is to be such a sacrifice as is to settle the question once and for ever that God is love? Why, it is to be so vast a proof, that if the Saviour has had to train Himself for the hour, He has had also to train and enlarge the human mind to expect and to comprehend it. The magnitude of creation was meant to prepare me for something greater still in redemption. In the wonders of the one I only see Him make bare His arm; what may I not expect, then, when He shall lay bare His heart! *For this cause* I see Him first put on my human nature—become a man; and *for this cause* I now see Him stand within sight of the cross, prepared to prove in His own person the infinite love of God!

And can you wonder, I repeat, that He should have been

heard to say, "Now is my soul troubled"? Why, *nature* was troubled. Creation trembled. All the interests of time were at stake. Every lover of mercy was there, every minister of Divine justice, every friend of man. He saw that there was not an eye which was not fixed on Him—not a law which did not look to Him; felt that there was not a principle which was not resting on Him entirely for support. And "now," said He, with all the Divine capabilities of His nature in stress, "now is my soul troubled." The vastness of the crisis rose up before Him. Reasons the most profound urge themselves why it should be allowed to pass. If love be not stronger than all, it will *pass*. If the heart of God be not larger than all law, it will pass, and man perish. Now, now, if the love of God for man is not infinite, the cords of the sacrifice will be severed, and the victim go free. "Now is my soul troubled, *and what shall I say?*" Oh! if ever there was silence in heaven, if ever the universe was hushed, was it not then to hear what he would say? Imagine the answer delayed—the pause prolonged. But no; the reply was ready, "For this cause came I to this hour: Father, glorify thy name!" In that prayer all the preparations, feelings, desires, and purposes of the past were collected and concentrated—it was the embodiment of all law, and the expression of all love. "Father, glorify thy name"—at that utterance a burden fell from the minds of the blessed, the universe breathed more freely. The cup does not pass. Love triumphs. Beyond this He *cannot* go; even *He* cannot go. "Herein is love"—the love of His heart, the heart of His love. In proving Himself equal to that crisis, He has proved Himself equal to every crisis that can arise. No *extreme* MORE stupendous than this can be encountered in the history of the universe. "For this cause," said He, "came I to this hour:" and it was because He *was* there, and because He accepted that hour with all its Godlike responsibilities, that we are here at this hour—that the world may be saved, as far as He is concerned, at any hour—that all the hours of eternal blessedness

await us—and that heaven at this hour is overflowing with the strain, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!"

II.

1. Now, though that hour stands alone in the world's history, there was, first, I repeat, a great principle underlying it of universal application—the principle that there is an hour or period in the life of every man, every Christian, every Church, every community of Churches, for which every previous hour is a designed means of preparation. The *hour* was mediatorial, and therefore unique—the *principle* is moral, and therefore universal. Every human being is responsible, at every moment of his existence, for such an amount of excellence and such a capacity for usefulness as he would have acquired had he cultivated his moral nature to the utmost through every previous moment of his being. Christ came not to exempt us from this principle, but to gather up and expiate the guilt of our violation of it, and so to put us once more in the way of obeying it from loftier motives. According to the ideal of the Divine government, every age of the world, and therefore every member of every age, is bound to regard, not only every hour of his own life, but of all historic time, as the means of his own preparation and progress. Is not this the meaning of such passages as this—"That upon *you* may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon *this* generation"? Why? Not that the *earlier* generations were not guilty and punishable in their degree, but that each generation, as it comes on the stage of life, and finds itself surrounded with evil, brings with it means for reducing that evil, and is held responsible for employing them to the utmost. That is its hour. If, however, it lifts no protest, organizes no remedial force, then it is regarded as accepting that evil, adopting it, making it all its own, with the further guilt of adding its own signature and sanction, and so reinforcing it for all the future.

Is not this, too, the force of the grand appeal, "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born enrolled in heaven"? And as the apostle proceeds with his inventory of the Church's moral wealth, we are to remember that it is the piled-up result of ages of accumulation. Even the Jewish Church was always becoming richer. But we are heirs of the whole. We come into the entire property. "We have come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling." A life was wanting which should gather up all these scattered influences of the past, concentrate them in an embodied form, make them an incarnate fact. This Christ did in that *hour*—baptizing the principle in His blood—augmenting its power beyond all computation. Calvary itself is but Sinai transfigured — law changed into love, and so become more binding. By the crisis of that hour He has given a new aspect to life and its uses. That hour, so far from discharging us from service and suffering for man's recovery—that hour collected, not merely all the holy influences of the past, but all the rays of the Sun of Righteousness into one burning focus of love, to be ever after held over the heart of the Church, kindling and inflaming it with ardour for the world's salvation. True; the world's *redemption* required *the* cross; but not less true is it that its salvation involves for each Christian *a* cross—cannot be effected without. This is the very law of Christian discipleship—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up *his* cross and follow me." Brethren, it was not meant that our Lord's hour should end with Himself. It was not meant that His life and character should be separated from ours by a great chasm—a vast abyss; *His* all deeds, and ours all professions; His all sacrifice, all CROSS—and ours all ease and indulgence. It is not enough for the Church to glory in the cross as the symbol of its own salvation. Is it taking up its own cross in the work of saving

others? Has it any cross of its own? Is it really and truly a Church militant—a Church confronting the world like an army facing the foe?

2. Seasons of special service and sacrifice, secondly, have actually occurred, and are recorded in the history of the Church. I might go back to one of the earliest events that befell "the Church in the wilderness." As early as the second year of their wanderings, they are brought up to the edge of the promised land. Will they not enter at once and take possession? For this cause they have been brought to this place, and to this hour; and have been trained for it by miracle. But the spies bring back a disheartening report; the people prove recreant to the great occasion; and their doom is, that the desert shall prove *their* grave, and thirty-eight years of wandering for their children. I believe the whole of Israel's history to possess a symbolic value; and I believe that the Christian Church has been brought up to the edge of many a promised land, and that it had had a training which should have prepared it for crossing; but that, wanting in the faith, the fortitude, the Christian heroism necessary for the hour, the opportunity was lost, and many a forty years' wandering, desert life was the result.

Coming to the New Testament, I might derive *examples* from the Acts of the Apostles, and *warnings* from the seven Asiatic Churches. And is there nothing to be learned to the same effect from the history of the Reformation? Why was it that that mighty process stopped—stopped, as if a tide in the height of its roll and rush should be suddenly smitten into marble? The work of the Church at such a time is twofold—internal purification and external aggression. The Christianity of that day concerned itself only with the former —its own purification; the hour for aggression was allowed to pass by unimproved; and, in just retribution, the Church was itself soon smitten with paralysis and spiritual death.

In our own land, the time for another Reformation came. A Wesley, a Whitfield, and a band of apostolic men went

everywhere, calling the world to repent, and the Church to awake and to do her first works. And you know what trials —what "deaths oft" they endured in fulfilling their Divine commission. That was *their* hour. What if they had shrunk from it? What if they had allowed their bitter cup to pass? Humanly speaking, the Church in this land would still have been slumbering on—would have died in its sleep.

Then came the hour for the great missionary movement. It was an hour that demanded qualities of the highest order —deep dependence on God—heroic indifference to the world's ridicule, ay, and to the timidity and unbelief of parts of the Church itself—and a high, enterprising, self-denying faith. But if you look into the times immediately prior, you will find that numerous influences had been at work in the nation as well as in the Church, training us specifically for that hour. But what if our Christian fathers had evaded its responsibilities? What if the clouds which hung black and threatening over the missionary field had deterred them from entering on its cultivation? What would—what *could* have been our condition at this moment? Why, those clouds which have now discharged themselves in fruitful showers would have burst on us in blasting and mildew.

Now, I suppose, brethren, that this is the principle on which the history of every Christian denomination is written in heaven. Each community has its own providential training. Each has its own resources, characteristics, aptitudes. And then each has its own opportunities—not only those more general opportunities which it may have in common with others—but its special calls to duty. These are its hours—its tests and turning points—calling frequently for unusual effort and faith, and even sacrifice. And I suppose its history in heaven is very much the history of its conduct in relation to these hours. Could our different communities be content to be judged by the way in which, thus far, they have met such hours?

3. The example of Christ in the text teaches, thirdly, that

such times of effort, trial, and sacrifice should be expected, prepared for, and ascertained. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The Spirit is always speaking to the Churches; but if their ears come to be filled with other sounds, His voice will pass unheard. Had Paul been sinking into self-indulgence at the time, he would have had no vision of a man of Macedonia crying for help. Had the Church at Antioch been self-satisfied and worldly, the Spirit might have said once and again, "Separate me Paul and Barnabas"—there would have been no ears to hear. And ought not the Christian community *now*, which has no visions, no calls, no marked hours, to be restless and uneasy? What, none in a world still perishing—in a world in which the heathen part of the population increases more rapidly than our rate of overtaking them—in which the number of the perishing is greater *now* than it ever has been. "O righteous Father, the world doth not yet know thee!" O blessed Saviour, the Church doth not yet know thee! Why, the call to duty is louder than ever. I believe that any Church truly alive to its Divine vocation would have all kinds of duty put on it—all kinds of hours awaiting it; would see that all its past history was a training for the present—went for nothing except as it bore on the present; would feel that all its reputation for past self-sacrifice and zeal, so far from being a discharge from similar duty, is a call to yet greater.

4. The text reminds us, further, that the due apprehension of our hour would invest us with a consecrating sense of responsibility. Conscious responsibility of any kind dignifies character. A mere political crisis, by compelling even vicious men to identify themselves with great designs, has often rescued them for a time from their degradation, and given them nobility. They have caught a kind of grandeur of character from their position.

But away with mere shadows and surfaces. Here are essences, sublime, imperishable, and eternal. Here, the

recovery of a world is entailed; and we are summoned to share the greatness of the task. Here is an object which has made a Saviour—which has developed new features in the character of the blessed God—and we are actually called to prosecute His world-wide everlasting design. Identifying ourselves with this object, we enter into fellowship with all the real greatness the world has ever known. We are encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses. We pass to our work through their bending ranks. Are we aware that in God's great scheme of Christian agency, a distinct post is assigned us, and a talent intrusted to us? Is it possible that any Christian present could thoughtfully reflect that he has been converted, trained, anointed, brought to this day as an agent for Christ—that his short hour of Christian activity looks back to, and derives all its meaning and value from that great hour of Christ—and that he is left here for a brief space to let the world, ay, and to let the Church see his estimate of that hour, of the love which it expressed, of his own indebtedness to it, of its world-embracing compassion; can any one present, I say, believe this, without feeling that all his powers are due—his whole nature put in requisition? And yet this deep consecrating sense, with here and there an exception, is the very element in which we are wanting.

How consecrating the thought! You are summoned to pervade an indefinite circle with the influence that saves. How ennobling the inspiration! You can stamp your Christian impress on the imperishable interests of your race. You have been set down by the hand of God in the midst of the myriads of immortal men now teeming around you, expressly that you *may* so affect them. Rise, then, to the height of your calling. Your allies are great. You move in a line with law, prophecy, and the great purposes of God. There is nothing great which will not help, and bless, and join you. Your friends are exultations, prayers, agonies. Your scene of labour is a Calvary. He, your Lord, has purchased it. His *blood* is on it—*His* blood, the true seed

of the Church. His *cross* has stood on it. His heart is bound up with it. "*For this cause* came He to that wondrous hour" to which you owe your hope of heaven, that you might have your hour of deep consecration to His service.

5. The subject reminds us, further, that on our discharge of impending responsibilities may be suspended consequences of unknown magnitude. As I cannot be supposed to bring any duty of ours into comparison with the work of Christ, neither can I be supposed to mean that God is *necessarily* dependent on any agency of ours. Let the Church decline its work, and "I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up" willing servants. Rather than that His designs of grace shall fail, all nature should be set in motion —every spring of Providence be touched—new forces start into activity.

But I speak of the *fact*, that God has been pleased to make the Christian Church the medium of His grace to the world; and of the *law*, that as is our agency, so is our usefulness. How much, then, may depend, I repeat, on the way in which we meet impending responsibilities? Look over the wide scene of present missionary labour—on the character of our Christian zeal at home may depend the measure of our success abroad. The influence we are now putting into circulation will not stay at home—will not even die with us. It is our legacy to posterity—it will reach to those we never saw, and descend to other times. Yes; traces of our character will appear ages hence—in the churches of India and Africa, China and Japan. We are giving Christianity to posterity; what kind of a Christianity shall it be—a languid, feeble, spiritless thing, or a life and a power?

Look, again, at the vast field *awaiting* our cultivation—at its moral wastes, and sands, and swamps, and jungles, and dreary wilds. Mourn not for the *ground*. Wail not for the *land*. It is of *mind* we speak. The desolation is of the *spirit*. The blighted regions are of *immortal souls*. Oh, the

swarming tracts, the depths of continents, never fanned by a breath from heaven! "They are destroyed from morning to evening; they perish for ever without any regarding it." Who is not tempted to cry out at the sight, "O Thou, with whom is the power, arrest their increase! Stay the multiplication of human life! Forbid the onward flow of existence! It were better for these myriad myriads had they never been born!" But no; the prayer suited to the occasion is prepared. "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation; and let righteousness spring forth together." But so large-hearted a prayer requires the use of means correspondingly large; and on the character of our Christian zeal it may depend, under God, whether the prayer shall be answered in our day, or be deferred for ages. *For this cause* have we come to this hour—come to it with all our ripened missionary experience—all our knowledge of the world's crying wants—all our providential resources—and with our deep avowed conviction that there is nothing in God to prevent nation after nation being born in a day—that, in a sense, He is waiting for us, urging us, upbraiding us with delay.

Or look, again—look back to that wondrous hour which is for us both redemption and example. But for that hour, what should we have known of the infinite love of God? The great ocean would—*must* have remained for ever shut up and concealed. *That* hour was its only adequate outlet and channel. So much of God, if I may so say, was compressed into that hour, that to express and represent it to the world required the consecration of myriads of human hearts and lives for ages and generations. Are *we* representing or misrepresenting it? Every great principle seeks to become a power, and to organize for itself the means of its manifestation and diffusion. The principle of that hour organized a Church—called for a great society of human hearts—demanded ten thousand such channels to flow through

—could not discharge its fulness through less. Are we obstructing its onward flow, or living with our hearts wide open to the current? Times have been, in the history of the Church, when that hour was actually ignored—forgotten; when the whole redemptive work was as much lost sight of as if it had been a mere vision taken up again into heaven. But we profess to date everything from it—to owe everything to it. We profess that *for this cause* have we come to that hour—to the knowledge and the redeeming power of it—that we might bring others to it also. But if the world is to form its judgment of that hour from us—from our conduct—will their judgment of it be correct? We may not be deluding them with the pretended wood of the true cross; but may we not be fatally deceiving them as to its all-sacrificing spirit? Earnestness is the world's piety; and they yield themselves up to its power. *That hour* was the hour of God's earnestness; that hour saw Divine earnestness rising to zeal—the zeal of the Lord of hosts—self-communing zeal. "Because he could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself," and that hour saw Him redeeming His oath. The time for mere words, even for solemn oath-words, had passed. That hour was one great acted oath—taking the outward form of a cross, and the inward form of a Divine self-sacrifice—an oath-*deed*, which said, "As I live, saith the Lord; as *I die*, saith the Lord, I will not the death of the sinner"—an oath which was meant to go vibrating and reverberating through the Church and the world for ever. Are we translating and repeating that oath in our conduct? Would the world guess, looking at us, that such an hour had ever existed on earth, or that we had any knowledge of it?

6. Let me recapitulate. Having contemplated the great hour which saw the culmination of our Lord's mediatorial work on earth, we next proceeded to shew, first, that it is underlaid by a moral principle of universal application—which we viewed, however, in its Christian aspect—that

there is a period in the life of every Christian, and of every Christian community, for which every previous hour is a designed means of preparation—that such seasons of special service and sacrifice have actually occurred in the history of the Church—that such times should be expected, prepared for, and ascertained—that the due apprehension of them would invest us with a consecrating sense of responsibility—and that on our discharge of such responsibilities may be suspended consequences of the greatest magnitude. Brethren, it was the conviction that such an hour of responsibility had arrived that led to our modern home missionary movements. And I might, therefore, inquire next, Whether the urgency of that hour is not now greater than ever? The Church had been living and banqueting, or sleeping, within closed doors. It woke up to find that a world was collected on the outside, famishing for the bread of life. But though it threw open its doors, and rushed out with what was at hand, the famishing multitude is greater now than it was at first. And what is more, the urgency of the hour has grown greater, both from Church reasons, and reasons arising from the sceptical tendency of our home population. Not only will not the same degree of Christian zeal meet the increasing wants of the world, it will not suffice for the spiritual health of the Church, nor will it silence the suspicions of the sceptic as a Divine reality. Of the very same sceptical class in apostolic times, we are told again and again, that "fear came upon every soul." They were truth-smitten, and quailed. The *amount* of what was done will not account for this, but the unselfish soul which was thrown into it; not so much the quantity as the quality—not, how much can I conveniently afford? but, how much can I lovingly sacrifice? This is the spirit before which man bows down, and the spirit which God honours, for it honours Him. It is His own spirit, and therefore the only spirit which represents Him. And this is the spirit called for by the hour.

But, finally, let me add and urge the high motive to be

found in our Lord's prayer, "Father, glorify thy name." Observe, He did not ask the Father to give, but to take—to accept. "He laid down His life of Himself." Of Himself He ascended the steps of the altar. Of Himself He ascended the altar, laid Himself prostrate, and said, "Father, glorify thy name." Ages of exposition could not exhaust the meaning of that utterance. He himself went up in the flame.

Now, can we in our humble measure join Him in it? Is our eye fixed on the same high end—the glory of God? I know full well that our benevolent and religious societies are doing much, compared with doing nothing; I know that they can move and act only as they are sustained by the Christian communities to which they belong; and I know that the objects and claims which divide the attention and resources of these communities are much more numerous than they were. But I know, also, that however much we may be doing according to the standard of mere custom, mere convenience, or any mere human standard, we may be doing next to nothing when measured by the only Christian standard—*Christ*. Our very activity may but serve to conceal from us our want of zeal. Our very contributions may be mere substitutes for giving—may be one form of withholding. Even our prayers, instead of deepening our sense of dependence, may for the time exhaust it. Brethren, we need to be perpetually recurring to first principles. Instead of measuring ourselves by ourselves, we need often repair to the standard measure—the Cross. And instead of looking chiefly to inferior ends, we need to be reminded that there is an end which subordinates every other, and to raise our eye to the height of that end—the glory of God.

Yes, here is *our* test. If what we have given, prayed, and done, could be added together and made visible, should we be content to have it regarded as representing our estimate of the worth of souls, of our obligation to Christ, or of the glory of God? I do not ask what we might be ready to do in other circumstances, and with impossible wealth and

means. But, with our present resources—as individuals, churches, denominations—supposing that all we have felt and done in the great cause of the world's recovery could be summed up and made visible, would it adequately represent the value we attach to the glory of God? Is it such that it would bring glory to God? Have we ever made a sacrifice for Him? Or could we, if required, take all that we could justly spare from our domestic and other claims, and, placing the whole before Him, say from the heart, "Father, glorify thy name"? This is precisely what He *does* require. And here is our *motive*. This is the only *style* of Christian service that brings Him glory. Inferior motives will account for inferior service; but the man who thus acts has been looking at the glory of God—looking at that object which turned the Saviour himself into a sacrifice.

Tell me not that I ask for too high a scale of Christian service. It is the only scale which Christianity owns. Every other it denounces and disowns. Every other has the old world-stamp of convenience and self-indulgence on it. Only this is entitled to say, "Father, glorify thy name." Deem not the standard impracticable. Others have reached it—have found liberty, life, blessedness in it. And as they have gone on raising their scale of service, they have gone on saying with a freer heart, and in a more exulting strain, "Father, glorify thy name." Deem it not more than the occasion calls for. What, when every other religion impugns His name—when the whole of heathendom foully misrepresents His character, or rather ignores His very existence—when the whole sinful world is leagued and banded together to blot out His glory—can you do less than put all your resources at His service, and say, "Father, glorify thy name"? Too high a standard! Why do you forget what men will do—*are* doing, at this moment, to avenge their country's quarrel, and to glorify their own name? But here is a cause for which all creation is groaning and travailing in pain together until now—for which Christ himself came to His

great mysterious hour—and for which He has brought all His Christian hosts to this hour; and shall they have no page in the book of the wars of the Lord? "Father, glorify thy name." Too high a style of service! What, when it is to issue in nothing less than the restoration of a world, and *such* a world, to God! Why, the very prospect has already filled all heaven with ecstasy. *There* His glory has never been obscured—*here* it has suffered a long and a disastrous eclipse; when, therefore, it shall again burst forth with unclouded splendour, well may the blessed, with unwonted emphasis, exclaim, "Even *earth*—the whole earth —is full of His glory—the kingdoms of *this* world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ;" and well may we, in prospect of that hour, exclaim, "Father, glorify thy name." Tell me not, then, of what you are doing —I only tell you of what Christ is requiring. And I ask you—by that great hour in the past to which you owe your redemption, and by that sublime hour in the future when your Lord shall come again—regard this as *your* hour—the season to which you have been brought, and for which you have been divinely prepared as a living sacrifice—and say, practically, by your gifts, your prayers, your self-consecration, "Father, glorify thy name."

# SERMON XIII.

## CHRIST'S CONSECRATION OF HIS DISCIPLES TO THEIR WORK.

JOHN xvii. 18, 19—"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

YOU hardly need be reminded that the Bible contemplates two kinds of sanctification: the one, in the Hebrew sense of separation, or setting apart to a holy use—the other, in the evangelical sense of being made holy; the former referring to both persons and things—the latter to persons only; the former to *office*—the latter to *character*. Now, it is evident when the Saviour here speaks of having sanctified *Himself*, He, as a being originally, personally, and perfectly holy, could only employ the word in the former signification, as denoting the fact that He had separated or devoted Himself to a holy office. But it is a question with sacred expositors whether, when He prays in the same verse that His *disciples* might be sanctified, he does not employ the word in the latter sense, namely, that they might be *purified and made personally holy*—especially, too, as He prays that they might be sanctified *through*, or *in the truth*—for *the truth*, we know, is the great instrument of personal sanctification.

Now, it appears to me that the term, as here applied to the apostles, includes both senses; that the Saviour prayed that they might be sanctified in the one sense, in order that they might be fit to be sanctified in the other—that "the truth," accompanied by a Divine power, might so influence

and sanctify them *personally*, that they might be prepared to be separated or sanctified *officially*.

And "the truth," or that part of "the truth," which He expected to be chiefly employed by the Holy Spirit for this purpose, is evidently that which relates to the glorious fact of His own official sanctification, or entire consecration to the work of our redemption. Hence He represents *His* consecration to have taken place expressly with a view to *their's*. "For their sakes I sanctify or devote myself, that they also both be personally sanctified, and then relatively or officially consecrated through the truth;" that, standing under the action of my cross, feeling the full influence of that mystery of compassion—beholding how I, Thy Son, the brightness of Thy glory, there devote and set myself apart as a sacrifice for the manifestation of Thine infinite love—they may feel impelled to devote themselves with a similar entireness of consecration to the proclamation of that love to the world.

And this was the prayer of Christ, not for the apostles only, "but for them also," He adds, "who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Finding themselves ever standing in the presence of His wondrous cross, He prayed that they might feel themselves impelled to make His consecration the model and motive of their own, that God might be glorified and man be saved.

Let us, then, in the spirit of this great prayer, exhibit certain truths calculated to promote this Christian consecration; confining our remarks to such truths only as relate directly to the dedication of Christ himself, or have grown immediately out of it.

## I.

Now, the first, and that which forms the root of all the rest, is the great truth, that Christ should *have sanctified or consecrated Himself to the work of our redemption.*

"For their sakes," said He, "I sanctify myself"—I devote myself entirely to the work of human redemption. In pursuance of this voluntary engagement, He withdrew Himself from the glories of heaven, and set Himself apart to the sorrows of earth and to the sufferings of a vicarious death. Though He saw, as from a height, the whole array of duty and trial which awaited Him, the only emotion He evinced at the sight was a holy impatience to reach the cross which stood at the end of His path—a self-consuming ardour to be baptized with that baptism of blood. Though all the fulness and fire of the passions dwelt in Him, never did He waste a single feeling, but devoted the whole as consecrated fuel for offering up the great sacrifice in which His life was consumed, and by which the world might be saved.

And why did He this? Not merely to impart a benevolent spirit to His dispensation, though this is one of its sublime results, but because He had undertaken to embody before the eyes of the universe the glory of the Divine benevolence in the salvation of man. Charged with this exalted office, He came forth and stood before the world as the visible representative of the invisible God. "He that hath seen me," said He, "hath seen the Father also." "Henceforth ye know the Father, and have seen him." "I and my Father are one." Possessed with the infinite magnitude of the task He had undertaken, nothing could for a moment divert His eye from it; every action and item of His life was referable to this, and subsidiary to it. As far as consistent with the laws of mediation, He was content to conceal Himself, to merge His own claims, that He might occupy the whole of our field of vision with the love of God. He impressed on us the sublime fact that the Father loves us, not in consequence of the great propitiation, but that He provided the propitiation because "he so loved us," because He was bent on obtaining a medium through which He could pour out the ocean-fulness of His love upon us. He goes even beyond this—"Therefore doth my Father love me,"

saith He, "because I lay down my life for the sheep;" in other words, "My Father loves *you* with a love so unbounded, that He even loves *me* the more for dying to redeem you. He so loves you, that whatever facilitates the expression of His love receives an expression of His Divine esteem. By sustaining your liabilities, by surrendering my life as an equivalent for your transgression, and thus vindicating His law from all appearance of connivance at sin, I am setting His compassion at liberty;. I am removing a restraint from His love, which threatened to hold it in eternal suspense; I am enabling His grace to act, to save whom it will; and for thus concurring in His benevolent purpose, and opening an ample channel for the tide of His love to flow in, the Father loves me. Though I was ineffably beloved from eternity, He may now be said to have added infinite delight to infinite." Thus unreservedly did the Saviour lay Himself out, even to the death, to enlarge our conceptions of the grace of God.

And how could it be otherwise? Reposing as He had from eternity on the bosom of that infinite love which He had come to earth to represent, knowing as He did its infinite treasures, He knew that no representation He could make could adequately impress us with its vastness; how, then, could He be satisfied with doing less than the uttermost which humanity, sustained by Divinity, could effect in order to express it? A love whose sacrifices might be numbered and measured could not adequately express a love which passeth knowledge; therefore it was that He withheld nothing, but "gave *Himself*" for us. Less than the deep "travail of His soul" could not have represented the pulsations and throes of infinite compassion; therefore it was that, being in an agony, He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground—that He endured the cross, despising the shame. True it is that, knowing as we do "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," well may we be filled with astonishment at its amazing riches; but equally true is it that, knowing as He did the infinite extent of that love of God

which He had engaged to represent, He felt that nothing less than such a display of grace could sufficiently express it—felt that nothing He might say or suffer could possibly exaggerate our conception of the grace of God.

Now, be it remembered that having thus embodied the love of the Father, He has devolved on His people to multiply the copies of His character in their own lives. "As Thou hast made me Thy messenger to the world, I have made them my messengers to the world." They have now to do *instrumentally* for Christ what He did *efficaciously* and *really* for the Father—to represent His benevolence to the world. In making them partakers of His grace, He not only intends their own salvation, He intends the salvation of others by their instrumentality; He intends that they should go forth from His presence as messengers, conveying to the world the cheering intelligence that He is still sitting on His throne of mercy waiting to be gracious, and that they should spare no effort or sacrifice which may be necessary in order to proclaim the fact universally. He says to them, in effect, "You have given yourselves to me, and I give you to the world—give you as my representatives. Look on yourselves as dedicated to this office, as I, in a higher sense, was appointed to represent the gracious character of God."

Hence, partly, the mighty obligation they are under to task their utmost powers for the diffusion of His Gospel. For if it was necessary that He should turn all His infinite nature into grace in order to do justice to the love of God, is it less necessary that their natures should be turned into tenderness and love in order to furnish the world with an idea of His grace? Are our persons so capacious, our natures so exalted, that less than the consecration of the whole should be able to convey an idea of His grace? So vast were His conceptions of the love of God, that He attempted not to describe it—He contented Himself with saying that "God so loved us," and aimed rather to express its indescribable amount in Godlike deeds. And did He fall so far short of the great reality—was

His representation of the love of God so scant and meagre, that we can imitate it without sacrifice or effort? It is true His example can never be *equalled*, for it embodies infinite goodness; but with so much the greater force does it oblige us, in our humble measure, to attempt the imitation. Having *died* for the good of man, the least He is entitled to expect is, that we should *live* for the same benevolent object. To save the world was His *vocation*—His supreme and single object—so that never do we so much resemble Him as when we make it our *business* and *calling* to carry out His gracious design. Yes; as far as religion is practical and relative to others, He has made benevolence its life and essence—not merely a part of the Christian character, but the character itself.

## II.

When the Saviour prayed that His followers might be entirely consecrated to the work of diffusing the Gospel *through the truth*, we may suppose, secondly, that He contemplated the great truth or fact that *the Holy Spirit himself is devoted to the same object.*

Would you know what the design of the Spirit is in coming into the world? How remarkable and emphatic the language of Christ in reply? "He shall not speak of Himself." "He shall testify of me." "He shall glorify me." As the Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of His infinite love, so the Spirit came to glorify Christ by exhibiting and carrying that demonstration home, through the Church, to the heart of the world. But what must be the Spirit's estimate of the work of Christ, that He should thus, in a sense, be content to be silent concerning Himself, in order that the world might resound with nothing but the claims of Christ—to conceal His own splendours, that the eye of the world might rest undisturbed on Christ alone! And who can compute the enormous guilt of those by whose instrumentality His infinite propensions to exhibit the glory of Christ *might* be carried into effect, but who give that instrumentality to

other objects, and thus unutterably "grieve the Holy Spirit of God!"

Possibly, however, the promise of the Spirit to convert the world, it may be said, was not meant for *all* time, but only, or chiefly, for the *first* ages of the Church. So far from this, the gift of the Holy Spirit is the *great promise* of the Christian dispensation, "Ask, and ye shall receive." The *law* of the dispensation on the subject is this, "Every one that asketh, receiveth"—a law which establishes the certain and permanent connexion between asking for the influence of the Spirit and obtaining it. While the sacred Scriptures, public worship, a standing ministry, all the means of grace—what are these but *the great ordinances of the dispensation*, appointed as so many channels to receive the living waters of prophetic vision, and to convey them into all the world? And the great *unfulfilled prophecy* of the dispensation is, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Till this prediction is fulfilled, and the world convinced of sin, the promise of the Spirit to accomplish this work may be regarded as repeated to every believer through every hour of time.

Now, as the fitness of the Holy Spirit to be the agent of Christ consists in His due appreciation of the claims of Christ, and in His perfect sympathy with the design of Christ to save the world; so the fitness of the Church, as the instrument of the Spirit, can only consist in its sympathy with the Spirit in converting the world and glorifying Christ. Did Christ travail in soul for the redemption of the world? Then the fitness of the Spirit as His representative consists in an infinite travail of compassion for the application of that redemption; and never till "Zion travails" for the same object can she expect to "bring forth." Did Christ devote the entire fulness of His nature to the salvation of man? Then the fitness of the Spirit to be the steward of all that fulness of grace consists in His readiness to administer the whole to the perishing race; and never till the Church is in readiness,

by entire devotedness, to convey it into all the world, is it prepared to do justice to the office and agency of the Holy Spirit. Did Christ appoint the Christian ministry and the various means of grace as the channels for conveying His Gospel to every creature? Then the suitableness of the Spirit to carry out this intention must consist in His readiness to replenish those channels with heavenly influences, till the earth be filled with the glory of the Lord; and never till the Church has multiplied these channels sufficiently to realize this grand consummation will it adequately sympathize with the office of the Spirit, or satisfy His infinite desire for the glory of Christ. Hence the importance of each believer individually, and of the Church collectively, being "filled with the Spirit." So lofty is *His* estimate of the claims of Christ, and so perfect His sympathy with Him in the great object of the world's recovery, that He requires every member, agency, and influence of the entire Church to unite to the utmost in enforcing those claims and realizing that recovery. The absence of a single means which might have been employed is not only to rob the world of that promised influence of the Spirit which might have accompanied its presence, it is to proclaim to the unthinking world that He is not entirely devoted to the glory of Christ, and thus to cast a shade of grievous dishonour on the dispensation of the Spirit.

## III.

But if this view of the duty of entire consecration to the service of Christ be scriptural, we may expect to find that it is not left to be inferred from other doctrines merely, but that it stands out on the sacred page with all the distinctness and boldness of *a direct command.* This is the third truth, or the third class of truths, to which we would call your attention — the exhortations and commands of Scripture. We are exhorted to yield ourselves unto God. We are entreated by the mercies of God to present ourselves

as living sacrifices. We are admonished that if we are Christians in reality, we are henceforth to live, not unto ourselves, but to Him that died for us and rose again. Nay, we are reminded that we are no longer our own—that we are bought with a price—and that we are bound to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are His. Thus, not only is the consecration of Christ presented as the *model* of ours; it is enforced as the *motive and reason* of it. "For their sakes," said He, "I sanctify myself;" they are lost, and I do it for the sake of their redemption; and now for *His* sake we are are to sanctify and devote ourselves. Yes, brethren, we are lost—lost to ourselves, to heaven, and to God—lost as truly as if the hand of justice had seized us, led us down to our place in hell, drawn on us the bolts of the dreadful prison, and as if years of wretchedness and ages of darkness had rolled over thus there. Well may we ask ourselves again and again, How is it we are here—here, in the blessed light of day—here, in the still more blessed light of God's countenance—here, in His house, like children sitting in their father's smiles? *Why* is this? and *how* has it come to pass? Has justice relaxed its demands—or have the penal flames become extinct? What! know ye not that ye are bought with a price? It is the theme of the universe. Look on that glorious being descending from heaven in the form of God. Know ye not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He sought no resting-place between His throne and the cross? Behold that cross. Know ye not that He loved us, and gave Himself for us—that He bare our sins in His own body upon the tree? Approach nearer, and look on that streaming blood. Know ye not "the precious blood of Christ," and that that blood is the price of your redemption? Hear you not the voice from heaven which now says, "Deliver them from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom"? Feel you not the Spirit of God drawing you with gentle solicitations and gracious importunity to the feet of Christ? See you not that He who died for your sins

hath been raised for your justification, and is now waiting to receive the homage of your love?

"How much owest thou unto thy Lord?" Try to compute it. He asks not for a greater surrender than He deserves. He asks only His due. So that, if there be any part of your nature which He has not redeemed, or anything in your possession for which you are not indebted to Him, keep it back, and apply it to some other purpose. But does not the bare suggestion do violence to your new nature? does not every part of that nature resent the very idea, and find a voice to exclaim, "O Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds"? Accordingly, the Saviour claims you for Himself. From the moment the Christian feels the power of the Cross, his duty becomes definite, imperative, one. If every other member of the human family were abandoned to live without control—if the sun itself were abandoned to wander at random through infinite space—*his* course would be minutely prescribed. As if he were the first man of a new race—the Adam of a second Paradise—holding in trust the wellbeing of the world—his every step is divinely prescribed. As if he alone held the great secret of the Cross, and were consequently the most important being on the face of the earth, his every moment is charged with an appointed duty. As if he had "been made alive from the dead;" yes, not merely as if he had been called out of nothingness into existence—not merely as if he had been selected and sent down from the ranks of the blessed above—but with stronger motives still—as if his guilty soul had been recalled from perdition, where the undying worm had found him, and the unquenchable flame had enwrapped him, and his dissolved body recalled from the dust of death—and as if he had "risen together with Christ," had literally come out of the tomb with Christ, and had received life and salvation together at the mouth of the sepulchre, at the hand of Christ—all his new-found powers are to be held by him as a precious trust for the service of

Christ. As if he had come forth from the sepulchre at first with life only—and as if his reason, affections, knowledge, speech, property, had then been returned to him separately and in succession, with a distinct intimation accompanying each that he received it back for Christ; he is to look on himself henceforth as a part of the Cross—as taken up in the great designs of Christ—as bound up for life and death in His plans of mercy. His character is to be a reproduction of the character of Christ. The disinterestedness which appeared in Christ is to reappear in him. The tenderness of Christ, His untold solicitude for human souls, is to live over again in his tones of entreaty, his wrestling prayers for their salvation. And if tempted to lend but a particle of His influence to any other claimant than Christ, his reply is at hand, "I am not my own, I am Christ's. He has put it out of my power to give Him *more* than belongs to Him, for He has purchased and challenges the whole through every moment of time; and out of my will to give Him *less*, for if I know any grief, it is that my all should so inadequately express my sense of obligation."

IV.

But if a motive to Christian consecration is thus derivable from the fact that Christ hath bought us, another motive is derivable from the fact that the Holy Spirit has devoted us to the glory of Christ. And this is the fourth truth to which we would call attention. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" If the Spirit is promised to glorify Christ by convincing the world of sin, what is the instrumentality which He is to employ for this purpose but the agency of those whom He has already converted and sanctified? By whose *feet* but theirs is He to carry the Gospel "among all nations"? By whose *lips* but theirs is He to convince the world of sin? By whose *hands* but theirs is He to wield that weapon of celestial truth which,

because it is the only weapon He employs, is called the very "sword of the Spirit"? By whose *lives* but theirs is He to give the world an idea—a living and embodied idea—of the holy and disinterested benevolence of Christ? Hence they are to be co-workers with God the Holy Spirit.

But in order to this, the consecration of the Christian must resemble the consecration of the Spirit—must have all the characteristic devotedness of a temple. His fitness for being employed by the Spirit to represent and glorify Christ, will, of course, depend on the moral state of the world, and on the perfection of his contrast to it. If that contrast be not very apparent, the world cannot be expected to take pains and look after it. If it be not very considerable, it will in effect be nothing, but will itself be neutralized and borne down by the counter-influences of the world. If it exists only in some particulars, the world will be quick to detect the inconsistency between those particulars and the rest of his character; and will quote him against *himself*, and in confirmation of *itself*. If he still approaches the world, and places himself in friendly contact with it, when he ought not, for the cause of Christ he exists comparatively in vain. *Say* what he will for the Gospel, the world will judge of it by his *example*. Refer them as he may to the *inspired record itself*, his *life* is the Bible which they read—an epistle known and read of all.

His usefulness, we repeat, will depend, under God, on the breadth and distinctness of the line of demarcation which separates him from the world, and on the perfection of contrast to the world which he exhibits.

"But," asks the worldly professor, "may he never relax and be neutral? may he withdraw nothing from the cause of Christ?" What would you specify? money? and spend it in sin? Time? and give it to sloth? Passions, affections? and lavish them upon trifles? For, remember, there is no alternative. "He that is not with me," saith Christ, and during every moment in which he is not with me, "is against me."

Lax views on this subject are the origin of much of that inferior piety by which the Church is enfeebled, and its usefulness impaired. Thousands of professing Christians seem to proceed on the supposition that there is a sense in which they are still partially their own—that there are considerable portions of time in which they are at perfect liberty to relax and stand at ease—that at such times their conduct is quite neutral in its influence—that anything short of positive hostility against Christ is to be put to the account of service for Him. Now, were this supposition as true as it is false—were it quite possible for the Christian to withhold from Christ a portion of his resources, without rendering by such an act the least advantage to the foe, it would still be highly inconsistent and unjust. For at the very moment we are relaxing in His service, ten thousand of His agencies are at work for us. At the moment we are self-indulging, we are doing it with His money, in His time, at His expense, by the light of His sun. But when we remember that every particle of influence withheld from Christ is so much employed against Him—that neutrality here is impossible—the consequences of such conduct are alarming. Christians, could you ascend some mount of vision, whence you could look down upon the consequences of your conduct, you would see that at the moment when you thought yourselves most perfectly detached from all around you, there is a sense in which you were then standing in the centre of the universe with lines of relation and influence drawn from yourselves to every one of the congregated myriads; you would see that often, when you thought your character most unobserved and at rest, it was giving out moral influences without intermission—that the moment they ceased to be good they began to be evil—that, however apparently unimportant, they have ever since been swelling that tide of evil by which myriads are borne on to perdition; you would see that the world is the scene of a moral conflict—that in that conflict you hold an appointed post—that at that post everything you possess is a weapon of war—that

never have you ceased to wield them either for evil or for good, for the moment in which you thought you were only pausing, a shout of joy ran through the ranks of the invisible foe, who beheld in that pause a proof of your weakness, and the sign and means of their own strength—so that when you thought you were only doing nothing for Christ, they hailed you as an accession to their own ranks acting against him; and thus you would see why it is that Meroz was cursed because they came not out to the help of the Lord, and why it is that in the final judgment those who did nothing will find themselves standing side by side with them that did evil, and involved in the same condemnation. Oh, precious, precious influence, each grain of which exceeds the value of the globe! Well might our Lord be jealous for every particle, since there are but two treasuries in the universe, one for Him and the other for Satan, so that every grain withheld from His falls into and enriches the other. And well may the Christian regard himself with all the sacredness of a temple, since he cannot yield himself to any other claimant than Christ, even for a moment, without yielding himself during that moment to a hostile party; so that, in truth, his only escape from partial hostility to Christ is that of unreserved devotedness to His service.

## V.

But has the prayer of Christ for the entire consecration of His followers been answered in any instance? Have any of His followers made *His* sanctification for them the model and motive of *their* sanctification for Him? There have been such; and this is the next truth to which we would call attention.

I need only repeat the name of Paul. I need not stop to *prove* his devotedness. The fact is familiar—almost proverbial. His whole course, subsequent to his conversion, was in harmony with the prayer of the text, and with the conviction which he entertained that he had been separated

or sanctified from his mother's womb. And yet, with all his self-consuming zeal, was he exceeding his obligations—doing anything more than carrying out Christian principles to their legitimate application—living to Christ? Did he ever utter a word which implied that he considered himself an exception to what others should be? that no one was bound to be so zealous for Christ as he was? that a lower standard of benevolence was sufficient for them? On the contrary, how humbly did he account himself less than the least of all saints—how uniformly did he speak of himself only as one of a number constrained and borne onwards by the love of Christ—and how earnestly did he say to all, "Follow me, as far as I follow Christ!"

Numbers did thus follow him. So effectually were they wrought on by the love of Christ, that they "thus judged, that if one died for all then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again." They judged that, instead of living as if they were under little or no obligation to Him, they should henceforth act as if the duty of living to Him were the only obligation they were under, and that the best way of doing that would be by conveying the knowledge of His redemption to others, and thus working out the grand purposes of His atoning death. Accordingly, they were ready to be messengers or martyrs, honoured or accursed, anything or nothing, so that they might assist in diffusing the Gospel of Christ. And what was there in all this which is not obligatory on the Christians of the present day? What had the Saviour done for them which He has not equalled and even exceeded for us? *Compassion moved them*—but is irreligion less depraving, or sin less destructive, or hell less fearful now than then? *Zeal for the glory of Christ incited them*—but are we less indebted to redeeming love than they? We do not hope for *less* than eternal life; and did they expect more? *The Spirit of God impelled and directed them*—but it was in answer to earnest, united, and persevering prayer;

and is the throne of grace less accessible to us than it was to them?

Brethren, "the truth," to which the prayer of the text refers, has exercised its consecrating influence not merely on a Paul and his contemporary fellow-Christians. In each succeeding age it has been instrumentally creating eminent examples of devotedness to Christ—examples of conscientiousness, which evaded no obligation—of fidelity, which spared no sin, nor allowed any iniquity, however splendid and powerful, to pass unrebuked—of courage, which cowered before no opposition, and shrank from no conflict—of enlarged benevolence, which knew no limits to its plans, and toils, and travails for the welfare of men—of Christian self-abandonment, which swore eternal devotedness to Christ, though in the presence of the flames which were kindled for its martyrdom —and of love for man, which, even in those flames, wept over the misery of the world, and agonized in prayer for its recovery.

These examples are not lost. Whether we are conscious of their stimulating power or not, we are all at this moment reaping their advantage, and are consequently standing under the weight of an increased responsibility. Shall we not aspire, in the strength of Christ, to copy and perpetuate them in our devotedness?

## VI.

Dear friends, the practical application of all this to yourselves is obvious. In every bosom present it should excite the inquiry, first, have I been sanctified in *any* sense? or am I still an undistinguishable part of that unregenerated mass of humanity called the world, over which the doom of destruction is suspended, and yet towards which mercy is all the day long stretching out its hands to save? Oh, we beseech you—and especially you, my dear young friends—by the mercies of God, by the love of Christ, by the tender and gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, that ye come out from

the world and be separate, and that ye present yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

But many of you profess to have done this. You avow your obligation to the Son of God. All your present enjoyments, and all your hopes for the future, you readily ascribe to the riches of His grace. And often have you asked—are asking now—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good." He hath prayed that you might be sanctified through the truth, reminding you, first, that you are not to be passive in this consecration —that it is to be effected through the influence of *the truth* —so that your understanding, your conscience, your judgment, your affections, your will, all the powers of your mind, are to be brought into exercise; and reminding you that you are to go in search of that truth to the cross—that it is the doctrine of a dying Saviour's love which possesses the greatest adaptation to move a guilty sinner's heart. He *prayed* for your consecration, reminding you, next, that even the doctrine of the cross, exquisite as its adaptation may be to move your heart, needs to be applied by a power from on high—and cheering you with the assurance, that for that heavenly power you can never pray, but He joins in the prayer, and thus insures your success.

Ask you still, then, what He would have you to do? What *can* you do, but let your love to Him take the form of His love to you? and what was that but compassion for the guilty, and active, devoted, unsparing efforts to save the perishing, and thus promote the glory of God? What *could* the Saviour *himself* do, *as a Saviour*, in a world like ours, but labour to rescue it from destruction? And so completely did He redeem it, that He has left nothing for you to do but to diffuse the knowledge of His salvation. The only path which He has left for you to travel is that which leads from His cross to the sinner—the only labour to perform, that of telling the world of His love. And how can you do less than

*devote* yourself to it? Ask you *when?* Shall it be to-morrow, or a week hence? The Holy Ghost saith, "*To-day*, if ye will hear His voice." To-day, you have enlarged this His material sanctuary, and are now assembled in it; shall not your hearts enlarge as His living temples to receive Him? He comes here both to aid your devotion and to be its object; will you not welcome His presence? He has come here expressly to sanctify you through the truth; and will you not open your hearts to His sanctifying power? Yes, He is more than coming—He hath come—He "standeth at the door."

# SERMON XIV.

## THE UNION OF THE CHURCH FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

JOHN xvii. 20, 21—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

THIS subject was suggested to my mind as appropriate to the present occasion, on learning that this service, relating to the erection of a chapel by the Christians of our denomination, was to be held in a chapel belonging to another denomination. Now, such conduct, as far as it goes, is in harmony with the prayer of our Lord in the text; the doctrine of which is simply this—*that the visible union of the Christian Church is essential, as a means, to the conversion of the world.*

Were I to be asked what I conceive to be the *principal* evils which the Christian Church has at present to deplore, I suppose I should be only uttering the opinion of thousands were I to reply, covetousness, disunion, and undevoutness; in other words, the great wants of the Church are, liberality union, and prayer. In enlarging now on the second of these topics, let me invite your attention to the Scripture doctrine of the union of Christians—to the lamentable degree in which this union is at present wanting—the way in which this want of union impedes the propagation of the Gospel—the nature of that union which should be attempted for the

extension of the kingdom of Christ—the manner in which the attempt should be made—and the motives which should induce us thus to unite. May the spirit of truth aid our meditations, and the spirit of love enable us to act on them!

## I.

First: that there is a sense in which Christians should be visibly one, is a truth so fully insisted on in Scripture, and so freely admitted by all who bear the Christian name, that argument on the subject is quite unnecessary. As to the nature of that oneness, it will suffice for the present to remark, that it is a union of faith, as it relates to Christ—of affection, as it relates to each other—and of benevolent co-operation, in relation to the world.

## II.

Nor, secondly, can it be necessary to enlarge on the fact, that union among Christians is, in the present day, *lamentably wanting*. It has almost become *proverbially* true. The brotherly love which ought to subsist between the different denominations of Christians has to a great degree vanished, and where open rupture has not ensued, a masked affectation of charity passes in its stead. It would be a self-contradiction for children of the same parent to profess that they cherish the most sincere affection for each other, and yet refuse to sit at the same table, or to exchange the mutual expressions of fraternal love. And equally absurd and hypocritical is it for the members of different denominations to pretend to mutual affection, and yet to withhold from each other the most natural *expressions* of love. They mistake their mere worldly politeness for the sanctified ardour of Christian love. Instead of sincerely welcoming their fellow-Christians to the intimacies of Christian fellowship, they content themselves with the bare avoidance of rudeness, and say, "Depart in peace." Instead of pouring in oil and wine into the smarting wounds which calumny

may have inflicted, they think it very praiseworthy forbearance that they do not inflict an additional stab, and "pass by on the other side." How cutting the satire which should now say, "See how these Christians love!" when they have only just religion enough to hate; when they may be heard calling on Christians to come out from their fellow-Christians and to come over to them, as loudly as they call on the irreligious to come out from the world and be separate; when they exult in a proselyte from another Church more than in a convert from the world; when, by "the honour of Christ," they mean the interest of their own party—by Christian charity, the love of that party—by scriptural union, the subjugation of Christendom to the cherished peculiarities of that party; and when a scant and gauzy affectation of charity is supposed to be an adequate substitute for the warm and ample robe of Christian love.

## III.

But, thirdly, let us mark the ways in which our want of Christian union impedes the propagation of the Gospel. Observe, we are not now professing to enumerate *all* the evils which arise from our divisions, or we should attempt to shew how they injuriously affect the religious intellect and the practical judgment, by confining the one to the mere points of difference between us, and the other to the imperfections and faults of those who differ from us—how necessarily they impair our piety, and proportionally diminish our enjoyment—how they tend to destroy a sense of our common interest, so that *my* church, *your* church, *their* church, have become phrases so familiar, that Christ's universal Church, to which each of these belong, and which comprehends them all, is comparatively forgotten—how each party is led to appoint terms of communion with itself, which disparage and virtually repeal the *scriptural* bonds of union—how the spirit of division, so far from extinguishing existing differences of sentiment, tends to magnify them, and to create

others—how it keeps the spirit of calumny in constant activity—and how highly unfavourable it is to the correction of denominational evils, and the adoption of ecclesiastical improvements, each party being afraid to advert to its own defects, lest those defects should be magnified by its opponents, and be turned into a song of triumph.

The evils to which we would now confine our attention, however, are specific—those which retard the propagation of the Gospel. And we remark, first, that the unfriendly divisions existing among Christians *greatly dishonour Christianity in the eyes of the world.* As long as Christians contended only with real foes *without* the Church, their ranks were compact, and their numbers and strength went on increasing. But from the moment they began to contend with fancied foes *within*, their conquests ceased, and their day of weakness commenced. Ecclesiastical historians are unanimous in representing the endless schisms which early divided and subdivided the once flourishing churches of the East, as having eminently prepared the way for Mohammedanism, and even invited its march over their ruins. Equally certain is it, that the contentions of our Reformers retarded the progress, and enfeebled the spirit of the Reformation; so that many who had left the Church of Rome returned again to its bosom, and others retired and wept in secret. And who does not know that our existing divisions are the disgrace of Protestantism in the eyes of the Romanist, and tend most effectually to rivet the fetters of his superstition? One of his avowed and published reasons why he cannot conform to the Protestant religion is in these words, "Because the Protestant Church is not one, but is divided in faith and communion." True it is, indeed, that the Romish Church itself is *essentially* divided in a variety of points, both of doctrine and discipline—that its boasted unity is merely artificial and mechanical, the unity of the deaf concerning sounds, and of the blind concerning colours. But this does not release the sectarian Protestant from the guilt of flattering

the Papist into a preference for his own system of errors. Who does not know that thousands have been proselyted to Popery on account of our divisions? "Thousands," says Baxter, "have been drawn into Popery by this argument—more than by all their other arguments put together." And who is not aware that infidelity itself derives its strongest weapon from the divisions of the Christian Church? "Our controversies about religion," says Stillingfleet, "have at last brought even religion itself into a controversy." And what is the result of these disgraceful and wasting divisions? Why, that Mohammedanism, Popery, and irreligion still divide the civilized world between them—that reformed Christianity finds, on numbering its followers, that it still stands in a most insignificant minority; and worse still, that, like the two contending armies which knew nothing of the earthquake which had threatened to engulf them both during their conflict, they are so engrossed with their internal quarrels, that they are still insensible to their consequent weakness, and to the disgrace they are inflicting on religion in the eyes of the world.

Again, our divisions are essentially *ruinous to the souls of men.* The ways in which they operate to this dreadful effect are various. One of these may be inferred from what we have just advanced—*they tend to confirm the irreligious in their impiety.* Another is, that *they prove serious impediments to the sincere inquirer after the truth.* Besides which, *the sectarian spirit passes with numbers for the religious spirit, and is their substitute for it.* "Have you never known such a case," says Howe, "in which a proud man, a covetous man, an ungodly man, passed for a good man, because he stood up for a faction?" Men of this class are the crusaders of the Church, who mistake battling in behalf of their party for defending the faith—who regard *contention* for the truth as a good equivalent for believing it, and whose confidence of their spiritual security it would be all but impossible to shake, since they are conscious of a readiness

even to fight, if necessary, in defence of religion—the religion of their party. "Oh, how many millions of souls," exclaims Baxter, "are kept in ignorance and deluded by faction as if it were true religion!" As if the obstacles to the salvation of men were not sufficiently great without, we thus, by our dissensions, multiply the difficulties of some, and confirm the fatal delusions of others. *We* who are appointed instrumentally to save them, become the occasions of, and accessories to, their destruction.

And then, moreover, our divisions *endanger the success of our missionary operations, and delay the conversion of the world.* They do this partly *by dividing our limited instrumentality.* One church abounds more in the zeal which burns for active exertion, and another in the wisdom which is profitable to direct; here union would be strength, but separation is weakness and folly. One society calls aloud for agents, and pledges itself to raise the funds for their support; while another proclaims that it has agents ready if it did but possess means for sending them forth. Here sympathy with each other's wants, by uniting their respective means, would augment the resources of both; while a spirit of division is making that which is already little, still less. The combined resources of the whole Church would be only adequate to its work; but, as if we possessed them in superfluous abundance, we so effectually reduce them by our division, that their insignificance tempts opposition, and incurs defeat.

Not only do our dissensions divide and weaken our missionary resources at home, *they also counteract their influence abroad.* It is in vain to say that but little disagreement exists *as yet* among our Christian missionaries abroad; the seeds of discord only ask for time, and they will not fail to bear their proper fruit. It is in vain to say that good is done notwithstanding our disunion; the partial good which is effected abroad is effected by merging the disputes of home; in fact, by uniting—by pretending to a degree of fraternity which the relative state of parties at home will not justify.

And would not a knowledge of our differences there be fatal to our usefulness? Would it not shake the confidence of the recent convert there—and embroil the churches—and cover the breast of the idolater with an additional coat of resistance to the arrows of the Lord—and arm the Brahmin, the sceptic, and every hostile hand, with a new weapon of attack? To expect that a divided Church should be honoured by God in the conversion of the world, is to expect that the prayer of Christ, in the text, will be frustrated in pure indulgence to our perverseness. Having implored the unity of His disciples as essential to the final success of His Gospel, we cannot expect the *end* independent of the *means*, without impugning His wisdom, and hoping that His prayer may be forgotten.

The unity of the Church is not merely a scriptural doctrine; its practical and visible exhibition is evidently intended to be the grand means for the conversion of the world. By our divisions, therefore, we are either guiltily counteracting the plans of God, or else they evince an expectation that, in homage to our importance, He will repeal His own well-ordered designs—put extraordinary honour on those who love their own particular opinions in preference to His commands—and thus publish Himself to the world as the patron of variance and divisions among His people.

And, more than all, our dissensions impede the usefulness of the Church, and delay the conversion of the world, *by grieving the Holy Spirit of God.* Were any particular section of the Church profanely to proclaim its independence of Divine influence, it would be denounced as heterodox by the common consent of Christendom. And yet the necessity of such influence is not insisted on in Scripture more clearly and frequently than is the necessity of Christian union, in order to the full impartation of that influence. So that, to expect enlarged prosperity without the aid of the Spirit, and to expect His enlarged aid in a divided Church, are expectations equally unscriptural and profane. Had the dawning of the day of Pentecost found the apostles assembled

in strife, or split into factions, can we imagine that the Divine Spirit would have approached the contentious scene—or have filled with *His* presence a house filled already with the presence of another, an evil spirit? Something quicker and stronger than reasoning—an instinctive conviction—tells us that He would not. And what, then, is the change, pray, which we suppose Him to have since undergone—or what the peculiar grounds which lead us to expect that He will mingle with our strifes and countenance our schisms? He is still the Spirit of peace, and can He approve of our wars? He is still the Spirit of love, and can He dwell amidst elements of anger and hostility? Or, as the Spirit of union, can He consistently put marked honour on the instrumentality of a Church which seems determined to move only in parties, and to work only in factions? Indeed, it is well worthy the consideration of the Christian Church, whether it is not occupying at this moment a position of infatuation and guilt, in relation to the agency of the promised Spirit, similar to that of the ancient Jews in relation to the promised Messiah—whether it is not equally true of each that "He came to His own, and His own received Him not."

But the evils resulting from a spirit of division, what tongue can enumerate? Disdaining the ruin of only a single Christian, or a particular church, its aim is to embroil and destroy the whole Christian community. Times have been, when all the armed powers of the earth were fighting in its pay, and all the engines of torture active in its service. And if it has become less conversant than formerly with the grosser forms of persecution, it is not owing to any change in its nature. Though more than ever disowned and reprobated with the tongue, it enjoys the secret countenance, and the tried and faithful services, of a mixed multitude in all communions. It can boast of animosities as bitter—dominations as lordly—exactions as oppressive—calumnies as unfounded—and contentions as furious, as ever. It finds it as difficult as ever to conceive of salvation out of its own

little enclosure. Its operations are as active, extensive, and fearful as ever. Slander prepares for it her subtlest poison —breathes suspicion on acts over which all heaven is rejoicing —and makes it a virtue to hate men whom it should be a happiness to love. As if it were actually experimenting on the infinite divisibility of the Church, it continues absorbed in punctilios, and insisting on comparative trifles; heedless, meantime, of the cries of the souls it is ruining—of the laugh of the world it is amusing—of the awful remonstrance of the God it is offending; heedless, meantime, that among the most obvious consequences of its conduct are the grieved Spirit of God retiring from it to the greatest possible distance compatible with the continued existence of the Church—the infliction of fresh wounds on the body of Christ —the prolongation of the reign of Antichrist—the delay of the ultimate triumphs of the Gospel—the postponement of millennial bliss.

## IV.

Then let us, fourthly, consider the union which should be attempted, with a view to the extension of the kingdom of Christ. Christian union, to be permanent, must be based on the supreme authority of the Word of God, and on the inalienable right of private judgment. These are the grand, though simple, principles of the Reformation; and the Protestant who undervalues them is saying, in effect, "Let us relapse again into the bosom of the Romish Church;" and any association in the Church which overlooks or violates these principles, is sure, sooner or later, to be broken up. Acting consistently on these, we shall not attempt a unity which means uniformity—which substitutes submission to authority for the investigation of truth—which prevents a difference of opinion by allowing no opinion at all. We shall not require the members of another denomination to conform to us, but shall be tender of their right to judge for themselves, as a condition involving our own liberty and wellbeing.

Another essential to Christian union is substantial oneness of faith. *More* than substantial agreement is unattainable and unnecessary; *less* would leave us without any inducement to unite; but *this* is not only attainable, it already exists. Justification by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ—together with the doctrines which that great truth necessarily involves—is held alike by Episcopalian and Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Independent—by all the orthodox sections of which the Christian community consists.

The union sought must be *holy*, a fellowship of Christians; for its object is to subvert the empire of sin, and to extend and establish the reign of holiness.

Such an association would be *cemented by brotherly love.* Nothing less than love will satisfy the demands of Scripture —no unity of opinion in the bond of ignorance—no unity of profession in the bond of hypocrisy—nothing but the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This love would necessarily *discover itself in appropriate acts and expressions.* One of these visible expressions, of love to each other, the Head of the Church has Himself specifically appointed, in the ordinance of "the Lord's Supper." A union which should propose to omit the communion of Christians or of churches in this ordinance would be radically unscriptural and defective; and the church which intentionally places an obstacle in the way of it, is obviously opposing the will of God.

Unanimity of heart would infallibly produce *unanimity of action in the Christian cause.* The practicability of such co-operation among Christians of different denominations has long been demonstrated in the constitution and working of the Religious Tract Society, and of the British and Foreign Bible Society; while the public anniversaries of these noble institutions, as well as of most of our missionary societies, have often been festivals of Christian love, "such as earth saw never, such as heaven stoops down to see."

If we do not add that Christians should be *one in name,* it is not because we regard such oneness as unimportant, or as

ultimately unattainable, but because we believe that it will be among the latest triumphs, if not the very crowning act of brotherly love. What is of much more immediate importance, and more easily attainable, and more urgently enforced in Scripture, is, that the union of Christians should be *visible*. For this our Saviour prayed—and prayed for it as a requisite to the conversion of the world. It is in vain to reply that His followers are one, as members of that one body of which He is the glorified Head. This is *known* only to the Church in heaven, and *understood* only by the Church on earth; whereas the world also must *see* it. Evidence must be given to the senses of men, that not merely in profession, but in heart and object, we are one. The fact should be too plain to be misunderstood, and too palpable to remain a secret. Now, the elements of union we have described include all that is necessary to produce this visibility. By practically admitting the supremacy of the Word of God, we should feel ourselves bound to revise the constitution of the Church to which we belong, in order to remove from it whatever infringed on that supremacy; and, by acting on the universal right of private judgment, we should perceive the inconsistency of all ecclesiastical imposition and assumption—and deprecate everything like penalty and degradation for the exercise of that right—and thus some of the principal roots of bitterness would, at once and effectually, be cut up by the roots. Born into the same Christian family—adoring the same Redeemer —making His character our common model—the salvation of the world for which He died our common solicitude—and His glory our only end—what *could* result but the visible oneness of all who answered to this description? In order to render the spectacle perfect, indeed, the union should be one of churches or denominations; but, even short of this, such a union of individual Christians—of a considerable number of the members of different denominations—would of itself be a pledge and prelude of the speedy and complete union of the whole, and of the approaching conversion of

the world. Like the friendly provinces of the same continent, speaking the same language, living in allegiance to the same sovereign, and engaged in mutual and general traffic, the Church would present one scene of spiritual commerce, carried on for the advantage of the world, and visible to the universe. God would bless us, and all the ends of the earth should fear Him.

## V.

How, then, fifthly, is this union to be attempted? Were we to recount all the attempts which have been made to restore the unity of the Church, we should find them to consist of three classes—Those which have aimed to repress diversity of religious opinion, and to produce universal conformity to a given creed, by employing the principle of coercion; those which have employed argumentative discussion, with the view of obtaining compromise and concession; while the third description proceeds on the Catholic principle of uniting on the great basis of evangelical doctrine in which we already agree, and of exercising mutual forbearance on all subordinate matters. The former two have long been tried, and every trial has been a failure. Indeed, the very nature of the union proposed puts them entirely out of the question. The last named, then, is the only plan which now remains for the Church to pursue—and this is the scriptural plan. Shame, everlasting shame on the Church, that the efficacy of this plan should yet remain to be tried.

But the success even of this method materially depends, under God, on the spirit and manner in which it is pursued. There is not only a right *kind* of union, but also a right *method* of attempting it. We must abandon, for instance, all thoughts of universal conformity to a given standard of faith. The church which proposes that all other churches should come over to it, and be absorbed in it, is only evincing its own vanity and its ignorance both of the Word of God and of human nature, and is acting in the very spirit of

disunion. The union which the Bible inculcates is that which would allow the Baptist to remain a Baptist—which would allow the Pædo-Baptist to remain a Pædo-Baptist—which would allow the Episcopalian to remain an Episcopalian—which would combine them together on earth, on the same principle which will unite them together in heaven—not as Denominationalists, but as Christians. Neither have we any faith in the utility of subscription to articles, or forms of agreement, as the means of uniting Christians of different persuasions. *That* union, to be scriptural, must be the effect of love; if that love exists already, such subscription is unnecessary; and if it do not, subscription is a poor substitute. Besides which, such documents themselves are almost certain, sooner or later, to become the occasion of contention and division.

No; were we only to carry out acknowledged principles, and to reduce existing views to practice, the union desired would be effected. We profess, for instance, to believe in the supreme authority of the Word of God, and in the right of every man to follow his own convictions of its dictates. Let us act consistently with our profession, and we shall not, we cannot, look coldly on a Christian brother, for exercising that right, and conscientiously following these convictions, even though they conduct him to conclusions slightly differing from our own. Let us act consistently with our profession, and we shall not only not exclude him from our sympathies, we shall feel that the system, or the state of things, which in any way depresses him for exercising an acknowledged right, must be wrong—that we are bound to do all we can to remedy the evil—and that till then he is entitled to even more than an ordinary share of our Christian regard. We have shewn that the union sought is based on the common reception of evangelical doctrines. Let us ask ourselves if, in the Church to which we belong, Christian union is built on these doctrines alone; and, if it be not, let us remember, that in proportion as we increase the number of

requisites to communion, we multiply the occasions of dissention and division. Having rejected all terms of communion which are not terms of salvation, we should then be ready to fraternize with all whom we regard as practical believers, and with such only. To admit an ungodly man into the Church of Christ, and to reject a sincere Christian, are acts equally schismatic in their spirit and tendency; in the former case we are admitting an element of division, and in the latter rejecting an element of union. So that to make the Church more holy, and to make it one, are the same thing.

When a schism existed in the Church at Corinth, the remedy which the apostle prescribed as infallible was the cultivation of brotherly love. Again, when consulted respecting the divisions of the Church at Colosse—when he describes himself as enduring an agony for the maintenance of their union—and when we might suppose, therefore, that his deep solicitude would omit the recommendation of no means essential to that oneness, his great and only expedients were, that they would take a firmer grasp of evangelical doctrine, and that "their hearts might be knit together in love." And were he now to address an epistle to the churches of Britain respecting their divided state, the probability is, that an important part of its burden would be the cultivation and exercise of that charity which beareth and believeth, hopeth and endureth all things. Oh, if we would see the unhappy divisions of the Church cemented, let us try the virtue of this healing principle. Its eye would discover excellences in our brethren, where before we had seen nothing but faults —its mantle would be thrown over defects, which before had been exposed to the sun—and its gentle tongue would insinuate truths through the medium of the heart, which mere argument or evidence could never induce the reason to receive. Were such a spirit to prevail amongst us, as soon should we think of confining our affection to men of our own stature as to those of our own party—and as soon should we suspect our right hand of designs against our left, as indulge

suspicions of each other's intention. As often as we mingled in Christian fellowship, we should feel ourselves drawn closer to each other by coming nearer to Him who is the great Centre of the whole. And to *feel* that we are one in Him would serve in the stead of a thousand arguments to promote peace, and be a surer bond of lasting union than a thousand ingenious schemes of human device. Would to God that we were Christians!

Again, let us co-operate with our brethren, as far as we can, without compromising principle, in plans of general usefulness. How mournful and disgraceful is the fact, that, whereas a few years ago the origination of a benevolent institution on Catholic principles was the signal for the best men of all parties to unite, a similar proposition now would be almost sure to originate a party measure in direct opposition! Is it not the fact, that many a school, association, and society has been set on foot, not because it was felt by its originators to be necessary, but simply because a similar institution had been projected by Christians of another name; so that its supporters are actually held together by no sympathy of love for each other, or for their object; but by sheer sympathy of hatred to those other Christians. All the *good* they intend by the effort is to supersede or dispossess those Christians; and should they succeed in this object, their own institution itself is probably discontinued, as having answered the great end for which it was commenced. Alas, alas, for the Christian name!

Still, however, let us bless God that there is common ground of benevolent activity, on which thousands of Christians of various names continue to unite—that, at least, this *one* bond of their visible union remains yet unbroken. And it is the growing conviction of the preacher, that as this is almost the last ligament which visibly holds them together, so it is likely to be the first and the principal means which God will employ in again restoring Christians to each other's love. Whether He will compel us thus to unite for mere

self-defence against the onset of a world whose interest we are betraying and neglecting by our divisions—or whether by an effusion of the Spirit of love and zeal, He may lead us to think more of the will of Christ than of the claims of party, we stay not to offer an opinion. But, judging from the superior facilities for union which plans of benevolent activity present, and from the deepening conviction of Christians, that such combination is made essential to the conversion of the world, we repeat our persuasion that benevolent co-operation is likely to be the principal means of restoring Christian union. Christian, if you are active only *with* a party, is there not reason to fear that you are active only *for* a party? Take not your views of duty from any mere party point. Hold yourself free for the embrace of great plans of operation. Join hearts with all who bear the family likeness of Christ. Think of swelling His train; of proselyting to His one Church. Let your only contention with them be, that of the vine with the olive—which shall bear the best fruit. Pray for a blessing on yourself, and your own particular Church, only that you may be made a blessing to every part of the Church, and promote the salvation of the world.

And this reminds us that with all these means *prayer* must be conjoined—*united* prayer—united prayer *expressly for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.* The evident absence of brotherly love, and the general prevalence of estrangement and dissension, demonstrate how little, how very little, the Christians of different communities pray for or with each other. How *could* we feel estranged from the heart which had poured itself forth before God in our behalf? How *could* we hear him entreat as a favour to be more closely united with us, without becoming conscious of a desire to be more closely united to him? How *could* our mutual claims and rights be disregarded, or any of the social graces languish, among those who had thus mingled together their tenderest and purest feelings at the throne of their common Father?

But not only are we to pray for union, and to pray for

it socially—we are to honour the Divine arrangements by imploring that it may be effected in His own appointed way—by an effusion of the Holy Spirit. And here let us remember, that the divisions of the Church are expressly attributed in Scripture to the absence of the Spirit; for of those who "separate themselves," it is said that they are "sensual, having not the Spirit." Wherever their re-union is prefigured or promised in Scripture, it is represented as the direct result of a Divine influence; if bone came to his bone in the valley of vision, it was because the Spirit came in answer to prayer, and breathed on them. He is in the Church expressly to unite its members in one; for "there is one body, and one Spirit; and there is only one body, because there is only one Spirit. He first *converts* men to one way, that He may then *unite* them in one heart, in order to *exhibit* and *employ* them in one body, which He shall *animate and inhabit* as the one soul of the whole. Whence it follows that we are to seek the union of the Church, not only *by* the Spirit, but *for* the Spirit; that union is not to be regarded as an *end*, but only as a means to a further end. As the Spirit of light, He would illuminate our judgments, and make us one in the belief of fundamental truth; as the Spirit of love, He would render a oneness in more than fundamental truth unnecessary; and then, as the Spirit of life, He would actuate the entire body of the faithful in one undivided effort for the glory of God, and speedily give the world to its instrumentality!

Oh, had we an adequate impression of the value of union, we should feel that the collected and united prayers of the whole Christian world would not be equal to the magnitude of the blessing, or to the ardour of our desires after it. If we knew the might of united prayer, we should pant to behold a convocation of all the Churches of Christendom, in the persons of their ministers and representatives, prostrate in the fervour of believing and importunate supplication. If we knew how complacently

God, from the throne of His glory, would look down on such a scene, or even on the least approximation to it—how emphatically the Blessed Spirit is appointed to honour it before the eyes of the universe—how full the heavens are at this moment of His waiting influence—how inevitably the salvation of a ruined world would ensue—could we stand aloof from each other any longer? A voice would go forth from every section of the Christian community, saying, in brotherly, burning accents, "Come, and let us go *speedily* to pray before the Lord." The universal Church, like "the city of the Ephesians," in reference to "the great goddess Diana," would become one worshipper, so completely would all their souls be turned into desire, and all that desire flow in one channel, for the gift of the great Uniting Spirit. From such a scene Christ could not be absent. There would He be in the midst of them. There would He be to breathe on them, and say, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." By one and the same act, *they* would receive the crowning gift of the Christian dispensation, and *He* the fulfilment of His final prayer—for they all would be one.

In addition to all these means of promoting Christian union, or rather with a view of bringing them into operation, the apostle would enjoin it on all ministers of the Gospel to look on themselves as the appointed peacemakers of the Christian Church. How anxiously does He remind a Timothy and a Titus that it is the office of the ministry, partly to warn the Church against divisions—to rebuke its self-willed and contentious troublers—to soothe its feverish throbbings with the healing hand of love! They are, indeed, to maintain the truth; but they are to be seen speaking, or, literally, "maintaining the truth *in love*"—not mixing up their own unhallowed passions with it, and calling it zeal for God; but maintaining it in a spirit which shall win esteem, instead of alienating it. Let them follow the example of the apostle Paul in *his ministry*—preaching Christ crucified—glorying in it as a ministry of reconciliation—an institution for

restoring men to God, and to each other in Him. Let them copy him in his *epistolary correspondence;* and what were *his* letters to the Churches, but proclamations of peace—edicts from the throne of love—commanding Christians, as they valued the royal favour of the King of Saints, and hoped for a crown above, to love one another? Let them imitate him in his healing conduct towards those whose differences are only circumstantial, by sending them together to gaze at the Cross—by habitually exhibiting and exalting Christ before their eyes, as their common centre, and their only hope; remembering that little things occupy the attention only owing to the absence of great ones—that "our Church" is a little thing, compared with *our Lord*—and "our denomination" a trifle, compared with our *common salvation;* that if those they address are saved, they will be saved, not as Baptists, Independents, or Episcopalians, but as Christians—not as members of a particular Church, but as belonging to the Church universal. Let them copy him in his magnanimity towards *his* schismatic rivals; rejoicing that Christ is preached by them, though from envy and strife—offering to co-operate, and actually assisting, in every endeavour calculated to enlarge the kingdom of Christ—and, instead of eyeing the prosperity of other Churches askance, while all heaven is rejoicing at it, sympathizing in that prosperity, and thus making it their own. Let them imitate his prayers, wrestling with God in private for the peace and unity of His Church—deploring, in public, the existence of so many barriers to the free and general communion of the Church—confessing its divisions as its scarlet sin—admonishing their people to pray for the impartation of the Holy Spirit, as the only and infallible remedy, and taking every opportunity of associating with the ministers of other denominations in acts of united prayer for a united Church; remembering that the Great Intercessor above prays not for a party—that the names of all the tribes are engraven on His breastplate—and that those prayers are likely to be the

most successful which most nearly resemble His own. And let them copy the apostle's example in often dwelling themselves on the final union of the whole Church, and leading their people to the contemplation of the same stupendous scene—picturing before their eyes the glories of that day, when every party appellation will be forgotten or lost in the great Christian name, when they all shall be visibly one in Him. Oh, how natural would a spirit of conciliation become after gazing on such a scene! As if we had come down from witnessing the harmony of heaven—from seeing those who once differed here bowing together before the vision of God and of the Lamb—how trifling our necessary concessions would appear, how certainly our union begin! Let them do this, and they shall be called "the repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in."

## VI.

What, then, sixthly, are the motives which should induce us to unite? They are so *cogent*, that the least of them all is infinitely greater than all the reasons which can be adduced against it—so *many and various*, that no single mind can collect and combine them—so *affecting and weighty*, that, although the wisest and the holiest men have in all ages united to enforce them with tears and entreaties, they never have had, never can have, full justice done to them—so *sacred*, that their seat is in the bosom of God—so *vast*, that they measure with the universe; and so deeply laid in the purposes of God, that the great object of the advent itself—the salvation of the world—is suspended on their taking effect.

What, for instance, was the design of the whole Gospel economy? The angels who heralded the incarnation of Christ, announced that its object was, "Peace on earth, good will towards men." And shall Christians—the intended peace-makers of the world—so far from fulfilling their office, be unable to settle the preliminaries of even a truce among themselves? Is not every inspired injunction of mutual for-

bearance among Christians a scriptural argument for the unity of the Church? And shall they who are commanded to *love* even their enemies, shew that they have not Christianity enough to *bear* with their friends? Shall they whose religion requires them to pray for their persecutors, shew that that they have not religion enough even to pray with their brethren of another denomination? Is this to "forbear one another in love?" Has not Christ himself laid His new command on us, that we love one another? and proposed His own example as the pattern of our love, "*As* I have loved you, that ye love one another?" intimating at once how rich it should be in its fruits, and how ample in its embrace; and did He not wait till the cross was in view before He enacted it, thus making it peculiarly the law of Calvary? Oh, if Christians did but remember that they cannot turn away from each other without turning their backs on their dying Lord—without rudely violating the only new command which His lips of love ever uttered—without sullenly disregarding a request which came forth with His blood—with what mutual concessions would they approach each other and embrace! "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another!" How agreeable would our unity be to the Blessed Trinity in unity! Hence our Saviour prayed, "That they all might be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." How suitable, I say, that those who have to ascribe their salvation to a plan in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have united their infinite perfections, should themselves unite in a community of active love! And how supremely agreeable to the Blessed Trinity, looking down from the throne of infinite glory, to behold the image of their own ineffable union reflected back in the intimate and indissoluble oneness of the Christian Church!

How eminently would our union tend to enlighten and harmonize our views on those points which are now the sources of division! How greatly would it promote the

piety of the Church! Having put away the toys and trifles which now engage our attention, and occasion our disputes, we should feel with much greater force than ever the influence of high motives—we should be thrown directly on all that is vast, ennobling, and pure, in the objects of our faith. Breath now wasted in controversy would then be turned into the incense of prayer. Christian intercourse would then be, what it ever should have been, a religious ordinance—an exercise of mutual benevolence—a channel of grace. And the only spirit invoked in the Church would be the Spirit of grace.

In a variety of ways the union of Christians would greatly *increase their capacity for usefulness.* Union is strength: a city, or a kingdom, becomes powerful in proportion as its parts act in concert; and so is it with the Christian Church. Talent which is now consuming itself in the flames of angry controversy, would then be sanctified and set at liberty for a holier office. Zeal would come from one part of the Church to be directed by wisdom from another part. Resources which, divided, are not equal to the religious cultivation of a country, would, when united, be equal to an attempt on a continent. And having made the attempt, instead of fearing in every Christian stranger that approached our sphere of labour an agent from a rival Church, deputed to supplant us, we should view him as a reinforcement of our spiritual strength, and hail him as a brother beloved. But especially would union increase their capacity for usefulness, *by increasing their capacity for the reception and operation of that Holy Spirit who alone can crown their activity with success.* In order that the slain in the valley of vision might become an efficient body, it was necessary that bone should come to his bone—that life should enter into each body separately—that they should fall into order, with a view to the union and organization of the whole—and *then,* as "an exceeding great army," a skilful leader alone was wanting to lead them forth to universal conquest. Let Christians unite—let them form an organized body, which the Spirit can animate as the soul

of the Church, and He will lead them forth to conquest, terrible as an army with banners.

Such a union could not fail to strike the world with awe. Whether it were announced by a public manifesto from the united Churches or not, so remarkable an event could not fail to arrest the public attention. To see Christians, who had long been separated, merging their differences and sacrificing their predilections, for the sole object of diffusing their common faith, could not fail to conciliate the prejudiced, to confound the caviller, and to bring more honour on religion than it has received since the days of the martyrs.

But not merely would it arrest the public eye, it would assail and affect the public heart. The world would not be left long to speculate and wonder about it. They would find that the Church had united for an object—that that object was themselves—that they were assailed on all sides by the united and irresistible forces of love. The Spirit himself would be the leader of the Christian hosts—His sword, the weapon they employed—His inspiration animating them to the fight—and His power crowning them with success. Scenes of apostolic triumph would be witnessed again. Jesus would see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied—for mankind, convinced that such a union of love in a selfish world could only be resolved into a heavenly cause, would believe at length that God had sent Him, and would gratefully capitulate to His offered grace. From all this would necessarily result a vast accession to our happiness. Happy, indeed, we may now be comparatively in the favour of God; but how much happier shall we then be in the superadded favour of all His people—for in their sympathy we should find the reflection of His smiles, and an additional channel in which His love might flow; to the joys of internal communion would be added those of external triumph. Our joy would be the joy of harvest—a harvest of immortal souls gathered in to Christ—the joy which angels feel over one repenting sinner, multiplied by the numbers which would

then be added to the Church daily—the joy of Christ himself, for in His satisfaction and glory we should find our own. Of such a Church, God himself would not be ashamed. Answering as it would to His great idea, He would pronounce it good. He would rejoice over it with singing. In the light of His countenance its millennial day would begin. Nothing that could augment its prosperity would be withheld. No gift that could enrich it—no honour that could distinguish it in the eyes of the world would be deemed too costly to confer. A great voice out of heaven would be heard saying, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell among them."

And is it of all this that our divisions are depriving us? They are depriving us of more—of all that happiness which the fruits of our union would produce in the final judgment and in eternity! Yes, they are casting their shadows forwards into eternity! They are not only impairing our usefulness now, but, in consequence, they are dimming the radiance of the crowns to be assigned us then! And for *what?* Who is to be the gainer? What is the compensation? Which is the party benefited? Assemble the Church, and inquire. Surely, if any advantage is ever to accrue, it must by this time have appeared. Fifteen hundred years have been allowed the Church to try the virtues of division. Summon the Church, and ascertain what these virtues are. Alas! some of its members are too deeply embroiled with each other to heed the call. And of those that do, some refuse to approach, lest they should come into too familiar contact with the Christians of other denominations. And is this the religion of love? Are these the descendants of the men who were so lavish of their affections and their lives, that hostility itself was often disarmed, and their enemies turned into champions and friends? Is this the Church which was to make the circuit and conquest of the world, gathering up trophies at every step, and returning at length laden with many crowns for Him who had caused her to triumph in

every place? Alas! how often, and to what a wide extent has she herself been worsted and disgraced! Is this the body which was to be made one by the inhabiting and all-pervading Spirit, and of whose unity the most intimate and compacted objects in nature were considered the most appropriate emblems? Alas! the body is so dislocated, dismembered, and mangled, that it has become another valley of dry bones —and another resurrection is alone adequate to its condition. And was it for this that divinity and humanity met in the person of the Son of God? Was it for this He bowed His head upon the cross, to shew that God is love? Was it for this He instituted a Church—prayed for its unity—endowed it with His Spirit, and gave to it the world as the scene of its triumphs? Our hearts *feel* that it was not. The sighs of numbers mourning in secret over the blighted peace, the prostrate energy, the humbled honour of the Church, assure us that it was not. All the unreclaimed, neglected, perishing parts of the world protest that it was not. Shame, equal shame on the Jews who crucified the Son of God, and on Christians who, in the person of His members, are still crucifying Him afresh, and putting Him to an open shame. Blessed Saviour! we need that Thou shouldest offer for us the prayer which Thou didst for Thy murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Christians, was the apostle too passionate in his entreaty of the Corinthians, when he besought them, *for Christ's sake,* to heal their divisions? Supposing he foresaw only a millionth part of the evils which would spring from disunion, was he disproportionately concerned when he endured an agony of solicitude for the peace of the Church at Colosse? Would an entreaty less moving, or a concern less profound have suited the magnitude of the occasion? Where, then, is the anguish which would equal the divisions of the Church *now?* Brethren, there is not an object in creation which does not sympathize in his solicitude for our peace; there is not a holy intelligence in the universe which does not join in

an entreaty, urging us, *for Christ's sake,* to unite and be one. They are all interested in it—from Him who sits upon the throne—through all the circles of the blessed—and down through every rank of this lower creation, groaning and waiting to be delivered—all have a momentous stake in the union of the Church, and entreat us, *for Christ's sake,* to be one.

Christians, you are not insensible to sights of suffering—you could not look on a bleeding human form without emotion. See, then, that majestic but lacerated form which comes before us—it is the mangled form of Divine Christianity—her garments torn, her person wounded, and life streaming out at every wound. And as she turns on us a mournful and imploring aspect, each of these wounds entreats us to unite. Shall we stanch them, or shall we answer by the infliction of fresh wounds? Before *she* quits our presence, a voice from afar comes pealing on our ear—the cry of the superstitious, seeking ease of mind in self-inflicted torture of body—of the conscience-stricken idolater, asking if there be a Saviour from despair—of the dying on the shores of eternity, asking, but asking in vain, of the dark unknown before them, —all combining and beseeching us to unite and hasten to their relief. In aid of *their* entreaty comes a voice from the past—not merely from the depths of dungeons, the flames of martyrs, and the ruins of Christian temples—a sound of more solemn and appalling import—the voice of the myriads who, through the divisions and neglect of the Church, have gone down to final destruction—entreating us to unite and to send unto their brethren, lest they also come to the place of torment. And shall all these entreaties be made to us in vain? But above and beyond them all, a voice may be heard whose every accent should thrill through the universal Church —it is the voice of the great Intercessor within the veil, still praying, still pleading, "that they all might be one." And shall He pray thus *alone?* Will not His people join Him? Shall not Church after Church unite in the prayer, till the entire body of believers have joined Him? Oh, happy day for

earth—the first of the millennium! And happy day for heaven —the first of a millennium there; for the union of Christians on earth would be the glory of the blessed in heaven!

Christian! you can assist to hasten it on. Your duty is clear, definite, imperative. You are to become an agent, and an element of Christian unity. The Church is divided; resolve in the strength of God that, as far as you are concerned, it shall not remain so—that, if it does, it shall not be your fault. Christ is interceding for its unity; resolve that you will daily join Him in the entreaty. Souls are ruined—the world is perishing through its divisions, and yet on it will go for a time trying to save them by its divided efforts—labouring to succeed without uniting. But no, never; the plan is fixed by Him who changeth not—the unity of the Church *must* precede the salvation of the world. Publish it abroad. Be assured that those Christians who differ most, are all one on this subject—they desire to save their fellow-men. So that never can you insist on this ground for union, without touching a chord which vibrates through all their hearts alike. Resolve, therefore, to keep this motive to union in view yourself, and to insist on it to others—that the *visible* union of Christians must precede the conversion of the world, for it is the appointed means by which it is to take place. Their eventual union, remember, is certain; and oh, the glorious results of that union what tongue can tell! A triumphant Church—a converted world —a glorified Redeemer—a rejoicing universe! But eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart imagined its glories! Enjoy it now by anticipation. Let it be the joy set before you as it was before your Lord, and you will account no labour too great, no sacrifice too costly, that can hasten its arrival even by a moment. Act now, as you will wish ten thousand ages hence you had acted; and from this day you will seek to unite the Church for the conversion of the world, and myriads of ages hence you will be still blessing God that you did so.

# SERMON XV.

## PRAYER FOR CHRIST.

PSALM lxxii. 15—"And he shall live; and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised."

DAVID, having received certain premonitions of his approaching end, had now resigned the throne of Israel to Solomon, his son. The elders and nobles of the land had recognized and accepted the change. Transported with joy at the event, he pours out his soul in prayer for the youthful king and the subject people. But, behold, a Greater than Solomon is here! Rapt in a Divine enthusiasm, the Psalmist ascends to a loftier theme, and sings the glory of Messiah, and the magnificence of His future reign.

### I.

The text is a prediction; reminding us, in the first place, that the Bible is distinguished from every other book, professedly Divine, by the grandeur and the authoritative tone of its promises, and by the multitude and splendour of its predictions. Human philosophy may be said to have had three creeds; which might not improperly be distinguished as the creed of the past, of the present, and of the future. The books of Pagan antiquity sung only of the golden-aged past—of scenes of pastoral simplicity and happiness never to return; while, for the future, they could say nothing—their burden was despair. Then came the creed of the pre-

sent. As early antiquity faded from view, man became prepared for the philosophy of Epicurus—for the optimism which professes to be satisfied with things as they are; and which, instead of aiming at human improvement, acts on the animal maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But to this has now generally succeeded the creed of the future—a philosophical belief in the perfectibility of the species—a persuasion that man is, at length, on the high road to perfection.

Now, it would be easy to shew that each of these views is only a perversion of some fundamental truth contained in the Bible. But, then, it will be found, that in the Bible those truths exist in combination, and that everything which is there said of the past, or of the present, is said expressly for the sake of the future. Thus, the contentment with the present which it inculcates is not that kind of satisfaction which hopes and asks for nothing better, but that which springs from a comprehensive view of the Divine plans for the renovation of the world; which admires those plans as the wisest and the best; and which thus prepares us to become patient and persevering instruments in the hands of God for their fulfilment. Then, again, if the Bible tells of the past—if it sings of a Paradise lost—it is only to prepare us to hear of a better Paradise regained. Yes; the Bible is the true prophet of hope; it builds on the future, and the chorus of all its songs is of a glory yet to come.

But if—it may be said—if human philosophy is beginning to calculate on the future, it is at length moving in harmony with the Word of God. This, alas! is but very partially true. The Church and the world are indeed looking in the same direction, but far different is the result they aim at; and, as to the means on which they chiefly rely, they essentially disagree.

## II.

For, secondly, the text reminds us that one of the means

which the Church is to employ for the attainment of the desired result is *prayer*. Now, here we are at issue with a sceptical philosophy at the very outset. For while that philosophy would object to prayer as inconsistent with the doctrine of the Divine unchangeableness, *we* not only employ it, but rely on it; we even rely on it in the order of means as the first; and, according to the text, we are to employ it continually—never to allow the instrument to pass out of our hands for a moment.

We do not say that prayer has any inherent efficacy to move God: like every other means—like the food we eat—it derives its efficacy from the sovereign appointment of God. But we do say, that prayer is a condition on which it seems good to God to put forth His power. We do say, that we can conceive of certain reasons which may make it agreeable to Perfect Wisdom to grant that to prayer, which it may not seem agreeable to grant in the absence of prayer. And, beyond this, we would remind the objector that, clearly as the law of the Divine unchangeableness may be revealed in the Bible—and it is only from the Bible that he can have learned it—the law that prayer prevails with God is revealed, if possible, more clearly and convincingly still. So that the question comes to this:—Will he wisely embrace both these laws, and confidently leave it to God to reconcile them with His own Divine consistency? or, if he adopts but one, which will he prefer?—the less obvious law—that which relates to the unfathomable nature of God?—or the more plain and simple law, made in love to man—that which includes the sacred duty and the ennobling privilege of prayer? At all events, while he is engaged in a philosophic endeavour to reconcile prayer with his imperfect views of the Divine consistency, he will allow us to be occupied in admiration of that Divine condescension, which has made it both natural for man to pray, and certain that scriptural prayer shall be crowned with success. Yes; we would remind him, that disordered and ruined as our nature is, there are clear

indications still that man was originally made to pray. For even they who have practically renounced religion—who have lived in the entire neglect of all the various modes by which man approaches and adores his Maker—even they, in the moment of danger or suffering, are generally found to call involuntarily on God for help. The voice of nature, at such times, will speak out—will not allow itself to be smothered and silenced any longer—will cause itself to be heard. Overpowering those prejudices and that irreligion which had hitherto repressed it, it will lift itself up, assert the presence, the power, and the goodness of God, and earnestly invoke His favourable interposition.

And we would remind him also that the prayer of faith invariably succeeds. If his philosophy be sound, he will surely yield to the power of facts; and if facts *can* convince him, the Bible abounds with undeniable examples of successful prayer. "Every one that asketh, receiveth," saith Christ; as if He had said, "Prayer has all the certainty and universality of a law—a law which can never know an exception; every one that asketh receiveth." My brethren, in the whole compass of divinely-appointed means, prayer occupies the highest place, and possesses the mightiest efficacy. And why? It passes by all secondary means, and makes its way straight to God; it puts aside every human hand, and goes at once to the arm of God; enters the presence of the Eternal, and makes its appeal to His throne. There it enables the suppliant to take hold of the strength of God, and, in a sense, identifies him with almighty power. Nor is the efficacy of prayer confined to the suppliant himself. It places him in a new relation to all around him. Prayer is an invisible chain by which He can draw them towards heaven. It invests Him with an indefinite power over the destiny and happiness of the world at large.

We repeat, then, that while the world is at length looking in the same direction as the Church, far different are the objects they aim at, and the principal means which they

employ. For while prayer is the last instrument which a sceptical philosophy would employ, we not only employ, but rely on it; and, believing what we do of its power with God, we should be inconsistent and guilty if we did not place it, in the order of means, as first and best. And believing what we do, too, of the utter inefficiency of mere human means to renovate the world, and of the power of prayer to secure the omnipotent aid of God, we cannot help thinking that the time has come when the charge of indulging romantic views concerning the future improvement of man should be removed from the Church—where it has been so long and so unjustly laid—and be transferred to the world. For, while the world is indulging the visionary hope of changing the face of society by mere human agency, the Church of God, without abating a jot in its laborious practical efforts, invokes the almighty aid of God as the only and the all-sufficient source of success.

## III.

But not only does the text predict a change, and represent prayer as a means of realizing that change; it describes that prayer, thirdly, as partaking of a specific character—as prayer for Christ; "prayer also shall be made for Him continually."

But what are the claims of Christ on the prayers of those who are seeking the happiness of the world? The propriety of praying for the success of another depends entirely on the nature of his undertaking. Now, the nature of the Saviour's undertaking is simply this. The world was perishing in ignorance, guilt, and pollution. To recover the knowledge of God, which it had lost, a teacher from heaven was necessary; to expiate its guilt, an adequate atonement must be made; to cleanse it from pollution, a fountain must be opened for sin and for uncleanness. To provide either of these requisites, the world was as unable as it was indisposed; and yet all of them must be provided, or man must everlastingly perish.

Filled with compassion for us, though we were His enemies, the Son of God descended from heaven, to do everything for us necessary to our recovery. To become our Teacher, He assumed our nature, dwelt amongst us, and spake as never man spake; to expiate our guilt, He died in our stead; and to cleanse us from the pollution of sin, He provided for us the agency of the Divine Spirit. Having made this ample provision for the salvation of mankind, it now remains that the Gospel be made known, and be cordially embraced. The Almighty Father has promised that, in reward for the mediation of His well-beloved Son, it shall be made known universally, and effectually applied. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." The Saviour desires to enjoy this reward; He declares that He will draw all men unto Him; that He will save the very ends of the earth. And can you conceive of stronger claims on our prayers than these?

Did we consult only the temporal welfare of men, the speediest and most effectual method of promoting even that would be to send them the Gospel. The history of our missions demonstrates that nothing lifts them out of a state of barbarism into a state of civilization so certainly and so completely as that. It calls them together, gives them a Sabbath, throws a shield over their property, blesses them with liberty, and puts them under the protection of government and law; and thus it lays a foundation for all civil improvement and social happiness. But if we design to promote their *spiritual* welfare, the Gospel is the *only* means. *Here* there can be no competition—no rival—no question; the Gospel is the only remedy for a perishing world. Compared with its wisdom, every other system is foolishness; for it is the wisdom of God. Compared with its power to sway the heart, all other strength is weakness; for it is the power of God. Compared with its truth and purity—its majesty

and grace—Mohammedanism is an imposture and a pollution; modern Judaism, a ceremony and a fable; Paganism, a falsehood and a debasement; Deism, an unsubstantial shadow; and Atheism, a darkness and a horror. "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee, for thou hast the words of eternal life!" Yes; "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This alone can ease the conscience burdened with guilt; cleanse the heart defiled with sin; wipe the tear from the eye of the mourner; and sanctify and conduct the soul to the joys of heaven. But the Gospel *can* do this, for it is the revelation of One whose arm is almighty to save, and whose heart has room for the world. Such—such, then, are the claims of Christ on the prayers of His people. He is the Healer of a diseased and a dying world; and if we have felt His power to save, He claims our prayers that His saving health may be known among all nations; that the healing influence of the Gospel, like a heavenly current of vital air, may sweep over the spiritual sickness of the world, imparting life, and health, and universal happiness. He is the Champion of our race, who has espoused our cause against sin, and death, and hell; and shall not this be our ardent prayer, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things"?

## IV.

And here, in the fourth place, let us mark and admire the wisdom and grace of the arrangement which makes it our duty to seek the salvation of the world in this specific manner —by prayer for the prosperity of the reign of Christ.

1. There is wisdom in the arrangement which makes missionary success to depend on prayer in general. It brings us to the one spot, and keeps us in our only proper place in the universe—at the feet of God. It tends to annihilate self

—amounts to a confession of our utter dependence—renders appropriate homage to His greatness—and thus keeps us in active and constant communication with the Fountain of Grace.

2. But by calling us to His footstool to pray specifically for the prosperity of the reign of Christ, He is giving us an opportunity of avowing afresh our admiration of the scheme of redemption by Christ. To offer up such a prayer is to say, in effect, that we ourselves have made proof of the Cross of Christ—that we believe there is no hope for the world but through that Cross—and that so satisfied are we of its healing efficacy, that were all the world to feel its power, all the world would be saved, and heaven begin on earth. Now, to say this is at once to gratify the love of the Christian, and the very heart of God.

3. By this arrangement, too, the suppliant is afforded the strongest assurance of success in prayer. God is not unfrequently pleased to be found of them even that sought Him not; when, therefore, we *do* seek Him, we may calculate on His hearing us with the utmost certainty—but when we apply to Him on the behalf of the reign of Christ, the certainty of being heard is, if possible, increased. The cause of Christ lies infinitely nearer to His heart than it does, than it *can* do, to ours. It is the cause which His own compassion prompted, and His own wisdom devised. It is the cause with which He has bound up His own glory—on which He has lavished the resources of heaven—and to the success of which He has pledged every perfection of His nature. So that, in praying on the behalf of Christ, the believer is taking his stand on the immutable covenant of God—he prays with the force of an Almighty decree—he puts his hand to the propulsion of a cause which is destined to move forwards with the force of Omnipotence.

4. And by this arrangement, too, *every* believer—the poorest and the obscurest—is afforded an opportunity of indulging his supreme love to Christ, by aiding the advance-

ment of His kingdom. "To them that believe He is precious" —so precious, that in their holiest and happiest moments they feel as if every mode of expressing it, which they at present possess, were inadequate—as if they must wait for the perfection of heaven, and the duration of eternity, before they begin. However ample the resources we may now possess for shewing our sense of obligation to Christ, the great proportion of believers have to deplore how truly small is the gift they can lay on His altar—how little is the time which they can give to His service—how circumscribed is the influence which their obscurity of station permits them to exert for His glory. Christian, the throne of grace is open —open to you—open to all. Wise and gracious arrangement! "Here," you may say, "here I can gratify my love to Christ, and give a loose to all the ardour of my soul. Poor I may be in the world's account—but here I can pour out at His feet the wealth of my affections. Busy I may be in the service of man—but here I can repair in thought and desire, and serve Him continually. And let my influence with man be as limited as it may—here I can come and have power with God. While others are engaged in pleading for Christ with men—here I can plead for Him with God—here I can vie with an apostle. While a Paul is planting, and an Apollos is watering—here I can aid them both by bringing down the increase."

Yes, here all may assist—the youngest and the eldest, the poorest and the most obscure. To serve the Church with munificent gifts and splendid talents is not within the compass of your power. Nor can you, perhaps, benefit the world, by going forth to proclaim the Gospel—but the tear of the closet—the sigh of sorrow over the guilt of the world —the secret prayer for the reign of Christ—these are within your scope, and these are the elements of missionary success. By these you can touch the spring and source of all motion —and on *that* depends the final realization of our hopes in the conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ.

## V.

But, fifthly, let us regard the especial object of our prayer in the behalf of Christ: *what* are we to pray for? Our prayers cannot be necessary for Him, in the same sense in which they are necessary for ourselves, and for each other. He knows no want, for all things are given into His hands. He is no more the subject of pain, for He is not only ineffably happy in himself, but also the fountain of happiness to all the inhabitants of the heavenly world. He is infinitely removed beyond the reach of danger and of death; for as the King of Zion He exercises uncontrolled dominion over the universe. Personally considered, therefore, He is quite independent of our prayers. Personally considered, indeed, we are to pray *to* Him, rather than *for* Him. The prayer, then, that is to be made for Him is not to be made for Him personally, but relatively—on account of His relation to other beings—His relation to us.

In this point of view, the object of our prayer for Christ will necessarily vary with the varying state of His cause. A time of error in doctrine, or of laxity in discipline—a state of division among His servants, or of apathy in His service—a season of adversity or of prosperity—calls for a corresponding strain of supplication. But there is one object which it is always seasonable to implore, and which should always occupy the chief place in our petitions—the great blessing of the present dispensation—the effusion of the Spirit of Christ. Brethren, this is necessary—and this is all that is necessary! Why was it that the preaching of the apostles was so much more successful than the preaching of their Lord, though He spake as never man spake? Because when He ascended up on high, and received gifts for men, He poured out the Spirit upon *their* labours in the full measure of the Christian dispensation. Why is it that the preaching of the present day, though, generally speaking, it is the preaching of the Cross, is attended with no greater success? It is because there is not a pro-

portionate concern for the influence of the Spirit—and, without *that*, the preaching of the Cross itself will be powerless, for He it is who must take of the things of Christ, and shew them efficaciously to the soul.

And how long shall this state of comparative barrenness continue? "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high; then the wilderness will be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Yes, in the scheme of salvation, every instrument and agent has its appropriate place, and its appointed order of succession. In that arrangement the Spirit is the prime mover of the whole. Hence, the first prayer of Christ on His ascension to heaven, was for the effusion of the Spirit; till that was poured out from on high, the work of redemption itself, though He had just pronounced it finished, stood still; but when it came, everything was put into motion—the world itself vibrated—the gates of hell shook.

The first prayer of the Church, then, should be for the same object. Why is it—oh, let there be great searchings of heart!—why is it that the promised effusion of the Spirit is withheld? Why is it that we are allowed to see only the skirts of His garments, and not permitted to see His face? Why is it that we enjoy only a few drops of that mighty influence, of which, at this moment, the heavens are full? "We have not, because we ask not, or because we ask amiss." Individual Christians have not—individual Churches have not—the Church collectively has not yet duly felt its need of that influence, nor sent up the prayer which is equal to bring it down.

Oh, let that Spirit be sought for first as a Spirit of prayer; our prayers would infallibly draw down supplies of His influence—these fresh supplies of His influence would as certainly lead to increased prayer for still larger effusions of His grace; and thus, by action and reaction, our prayers would continually enlarge in their progress, and insure increased success in the cause of Christ.

VI.

But not only is prayer to be made for the reign of Christ —the text predicts its continuity, or uninterruptedness; "prayer also shall be made for Him continually." Under the former dispensation, the fire which burnt upon the golden altar was never allowed to go out—and the ardent desire of the pious Israelites for the coming of Christ glowed continually on the altar of their hearts—it never went out. And it is pleasing to reflect that, in the present day, there is a sense in which it is true, literally, that prayer is made for Him continually. "Last evening," writes a missionary from China—"last evening, a small party of the disciples of Jesus held a meeting for prayer in my rooms, in behalf of the heathen around, and for the kingdom of Christ throughout the world. In this land of the rising sun we may probably be considered as beginning that series of prayer-meetings which are kept up all around the world on the first Monday of the month—a chain of prayer beginning at the farthest east, and carried round successively as the sun advances to the farthest west, in the islands of the Pacific Ocean—and thus continued for twenty-four hours monthly."

Now, it is only to pursue this mode of calculation—and to suppose, that wherever there are Christians to pray monthly in public for the kingdom of Christ, there are some to pray daily in private for the same object—and then we are brought to the delightful conclusion that prayer is made for Him continually—that as the aged believer, like David, breathes out his last prayer for the glory of His reign, another generation is just beginning to lisp, "Thy kingdom come"—and as the Christians of one province are rising from their knees before the throne of grace, the Christians of another province are just beginning to take up the language of supplication for Christ—and thus a chain of prayer, beginning in the farthest east, is carried round with the sun to the farthest west in the islands of the Pacific, through all the hours of

time! And how much more pleasing does this reflection become when we add to it the thought, that of all the prayers which are thus offered for Christ, making one continued strain of supplication, not one ever has been, nor can be lost! Is it true that every sin committed by His enemies is noticed by a God of unspotted holiness—that every transgression adds something to the treasures of His wrath—and that when the cup of vengeance is full, He pours it forth on the heads of the guilty? As certainly true is it that every prayer of faith offered by His people in behalf of His Son is noticed by a God of infinite love—that every such prayer adds something to the treasures of His grace—and that when these treasures have accumulated to a certain amount, He pours them forth upon the Church and the world. It is as certainly true, that at the very moment when such a prayer is offered, in that very moment He answers it in His Divine *intention,* though He may wisely delay for a time to answer it really. The suppliant himself may forget his own supplication, or may despair of obtaining an answer—but *He* is still mindful of it. And however obscure the suppliant, He prizes it. It is prayer for His Son, and as such is music in His ear, of which He loses not a single note. It is a prayer for the coming of His kingdom—and as such, He places it among the perfumed supplications already offered by the saints of past generations—He places it among the last aspirations breathed by David, the son of Jesse, and of every ancient worthy—among the mighty prayers which ascended from the fires of the early martyrs—among the loud cries of those whose souls are heard from under the altar—among the earnest entreaties of the wide creation which sighs to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It is a prayer for the salvation of a world which He loves — and with delight He beholds it flow into a channel in which a stream of prayer has been for ages flowing and accumulating without a moment's pause — and which shall finally overflow, and

pour forth a healing flood of heavenly grace over the whole earth. Ye, then, that love the Lord, keep not silence. And in all your entreaties for the kingdom of Christ, let your loudest supplications ascend for the advent of His Spirit. If you would not grieve the Holy Spirit of God—if you would do homage to the office which He holds in the plan of the world's salvation—if you would do honour to the mediation of Christ by which the Spirit is given—pray continually for Christ, by praying continually for His Spirit.

## VII.

Observe, again, that prayer for Christ is to be offered conjointly with other things—"prayer also." In all conquered lands, the subjection of the people was marked by two things —their money was stamped with the name of the conqueror, and they were obliged to pray for him in their public worship. In allusion to this fact, it is here said of the conquering Saviour—"To Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba, prayer also shall be made for Him continually." The gold of Sheba—a portion of our worldly substance is to be devoted to Him, in connexion with our prayers. For to pray in His behalf, without accompanying the act with this proof of our sincerity, would be as profane, as to use all other kind of means except prayer would be impious. And who has not at least a cup of cold water, or two mites to contribute to His service, in connexion with a prayer for His glory?

But we apprehend, that it is far more common for a man to give without praying than it is for him to pray without contributing. He may give a small pittance to the cause of Christ, and the motive which leads him to do so may stop there, without leading to anything beyond. But the motive which leads him to become a suppliant for that cause at a throne of grace, will operate to other effects. The love which led him there will lead him, while there, to inquire, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The zeal for Christ which led him there will not there expire—it will there be fanned,

and fed, and rise into a flame, into which his property will be cast, as one of the first and most appropriate offerings. Prayer for Christ is one of the last efforts made for Him—we are disposed to emulate each other in everything rather than in prayer; and hence the importance of urging the duty, since where this is performed, it evinces a disposition to perform every other.

Brethren, do you contribute a portion of your property to the Christian cause, but withhold your supplications from it? Then the Church cannot rely on the continuance of your aid, for it does not spring from principle—and God himself resents what you do as an affront offered to His Spirit. He regards every power in the universe as more or less opposed to Him, but the power of prayer, and the means which prayer has sanctified. He views it as an attempt to do without Him—as a hostile endeavour to contravene the great principle of the Gospel of Christ, that not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit alone, the maladies of the world shall be healed.

On the other hand, does the Christian cause press on your heart? We will defy you to withhold your property from it. Do you sympathize with Christ in the travail of His soul? Oh, if that sympathy be sincere, it will turn your whole soul into desire—it will convert your very gifts into prayers—like the eastern magi, the act of falling down to adore Him, and of pouring out at His feet gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, will, with you, be one and the same. Do you sincerely pray for the outpouring of the Spirit? In imploring *that*, you are imploring a spirit of Christian liberality for yourself and for the whole Church. You are, in effect, praying that all the powers of nature—all the resources of Providence—all the wealth and greatness of the world, may be pressed into the service of Christ. For only let the Spirit be poured out from on high, and it will enlist into His cause every species of instrumentality which men possess. "The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee—the forces of the Gen-

tiles shall come unto thee—the multitude of camels shall cover thee—the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah—all they from Sheba shall come—they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord." Everything will be brought as an expression of love to Christ, and to adorn His triumph. Nothing, nothing will be deemed too costly for the great occasion. All majesty shall bow before Him—kings shall wait in His train—the spoils of earthly grandeur be laid at His feet—and Christ alone be exalted in that day.

## VIII.

How many and how powerful the motives, then, which should induce us to pray for the reign of Christ! A sense of consistency demands it. We call Him our king; and shall we not be concerned for the prosperity of His kingdom? A principle of benevolence to man requires it. The success of His cause and human happiness are one. His voice is the proclamation of pardon to the condemned, and of liberty to the captive. His conquests are bloodless—achieved over sin, and error, and the enemies of man. His trophies are the souls of men, redeemed from the bondage of Satan, and adorned with the beauties of holiness. His career is the march of truth, and righteousness, and peace. Then, who would not pray for His success? A principle of gratitude requires it. He has prayed for us with strong crying and tears, or we should not, at this moment, be in a condition to pray for ourselves. He gave *Himself* for us. And in heaven He intercedes for us still. Yes, this is the order—the manifest arrangement of infinite wisdom—that *He* should intercede for the *Church*, while the *Church* intercedes for the *world*. In the gracious fulfilment of His office, He prays continually for *us*—the censer never quits His hand—the incense perpetually rises—His priestly robes are never laid aside. And shall we intermit our prayers for Him? Let a sense of our obligation induce us to pray for Him.

A regard for our own welfare demands it. We cannot pray for Him without drawing down a blessing on ourselves —without enlarging our hearts—standing as in the counsels of God—becoming Godlike. And thus every prayer which ascends from His people in His behalf, like the vapour which the earth sends up into the clouds, returns again in showers of blessing into their own bosom.

Besides, prayer for the reign of Christ is in harmony with the pervading spirit of the Gospel constitution. According to that spirit, everything is made dependent on prayer, and may be effected by it. What is the sacrifice of Christ himself, but prayer in its most concentrated, intense, and prevailing form—the prayer of blood? Hence it is said, "He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He has turned the merit of His sacrifice into prayer. Intercession, in His hands, is a chain fastened to the throne of God—the stay and support of a sinking world! Yes; even Christ has to pray, and by prayer succeeds. If He would have the heathen to be His for an inheritance, He is directed to ask to that effect. And, accordingly, He does ask. "For Zion's sake," saith He, "I will not hold my peace; and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness; and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." And shall He pray for this object alone? He summons His Church to join Him. "Ye that make mention of the Lord," saith He, "keep not silence, and give Him no rest." He places them by His side at the altar, puts into their hand a censer filled with incense like His own, and thus seeks to multiply the voice and power of His own intercession.

But why should it be necessary to enforce motives such as these? The honour which He has put on us in permitting us to pray for Him might well overwhelm us with amazement. He *needs* not the supplications of any of His creatures, for He is the object of the Father's unbounded complacency,

who hath given all things into His hands. Or, if He chose to employ them, He might have engaged the intercession of His holy angels. They have never cast off His authority as we have done; they have ever counted it their highest honour to engage in His service. How astonishing, then, that He should ask for our supplications in His behalf! That He should permit us to breathe an entreaty for Him! That He should place us—whose every breath was pollution—whose every act was an act of rebellion against Him—whom He had to create anew before we would take any interest in His service—that He should actually place us around the golden altar as priests and intercessors for Him! That He should, as it were, change relations with us—placing us in the office of intercessors for Him, though the acceptance of our prayers, and the salvation of our souls, depend entirely on His intercession for us! Well may prayer be made continually for Him! And well may the Christian cherish the desire that every moment of His life could be consecrated to an employment so ennobling and divine!

## IX.

Brethren, in making an application of this subject, how painful is it to think that fidelity requires us to ask, not merely whether you have ever prayed for the cause of Christ, but to go so far back as to ask, whether you have ever prayed for yourselves? For, if you have not, it is too much to suppose that you have prayed even for Christ. If you have not prayed *to* him on your own account, it is not to be imagined that you have prayed *for* him on any account. Let me, then, repeat the inquiry—not as a matter of course, but as a matter of infinite moment—whether you have ever yet prayed for yourselves? Have you acquired a habit of resorting daily to the footstool of mercy, in the name of Christ? If you have not, let me remind you that, so far from promoting His cause, you are throwing yourselves as

obstacles in the way of its progress. Let me remind you that, if your conduct were universally imitated, this world would cease to have any intercourse with heaven—the footstool of mercy would be deserted—the angel having the golden censer would forsake the altar, no more to offer incense there—the destruction of the world would commence. Let me remind you that the cause of Christ, of which you are now so regardless, is destined to triumph; and the choice is now given you, whether you will share the honour of promoting it, or be dragged as a captive at its wheels. Believe it, my fellow-sinner, that he is now awaiting your application for mercy. He now sends to you this message—that He is waiting for you; that He looks to see you this day at His footstool. Oh, haste, and take refuge at His feet! Pray that He would triumph over your irreligion; beseech Him to make you willing in the day of His power.

But if you do pray for the reign of Christ, cultivate the habit. Pray for an increase of your own personal piety; and remember that, in so doing, you are, in effect, praying for Him—for you are asking Him to augment His glory by the acceptance of your homage—to multiply His subjects by adding you to their number—to advance His cause by taking you into His service, and condescending to employ your instrumentality.

Pray for the prosperity of the Christian Church. "But has not a spirit of supplication, of late years, distinguished the Churches of Christ?" Only very partially; whereas the prayer wanted is universal. Only very feebly; whereas the prayer wanted is the effectual, fervent prayer, which availeth much. Only by fits; whereas the prayer needed is the continuous, unbroken, persevering cry of importunity. Only the prayer of party—effects prove it; whereas the prayer wanted is the prayer of all, with one accord.

Pray, then, for the prosperity of the Christian Church. Do you ask, what should be the special object of supplica-

tion? Oh, it wants more spirituality, or distinctness from the world—it wants a higher appreciation of its office, as the instrument of Christ for saving the world—it wants more of the spirit of liberality, union, zeal. But there is one want which comprehends the whole—the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Let that be secured, and in obtaining that, we shall obtain the supply of every other want—we should find that we had come into possession of the same mind which was also in Christ—a benevolence which would yearn over the whole human race—a brotherly love which would combine with the entire body of Christians for the conversion of the world—a zeal which would be constantly devising fresh methods of usefulness, practising self-denial, and laying itself out in the service of Christ—and a perseverance which would never rest till the whole family of man should be seated together at the banquet of salvation.

But if all this is to be obtained by prayer, shall we not seek for it—and seek for it at once? Why should this Church—this congregation—delay? Why should we not now—every soul—send up an earnest and united cry for the Spirit of God? And, if we did so, who will dare to say that the blessing would not forthwith descend? and who will venture to calculate the extent and the consequence of that blessing? Brethren, do we really believe in the efficacy of prayer—do we? Then let us prove it—let us take an imaginary case—let us take, for instance, that forlorn hope of the missionary war, China, as the scene of a new Christian enterprize. Let every step taken be consecrated by prayer. Let the heralds be sent to summon it in the name of Christ. Let Moses retire to the hill to pray—and, if necessary, let Joshua and Hur accompany and assist him; in other words, let chosen men be appointed to pray—let others follow them in unbroken succession—and others meet to pray for the chosen intercessors—and let them entreat God continually for that specific object; let this be done—and could you

doubt of success? Would you hesitate, supposing you were qualified, to be yourself one of the heralds? Then you are not a believer.

Christian brethren! prayer is not only desirable, obligatory, necessary—it is, in a sense, becoming inevitable. We read of the Church of old being shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed — the faith of Christ. The Church at present is shut up unto prayer—prayer for the Spirit. It must submit to disgrace in heathen lands, or call down help from heaven. It is so completely ensnared by success, that it must sound a retreat or betake itself to God in unusual prayer. Happy necessity, which shall drive it to this resource! Blessed exigence, which shall bring the whole Church on its knees before God! The time to favour her, yea, the set time, will then have come. "God, even our own God, will bless us." Gazing from His throne upon His Church, suppliant at His feet, He will say, "Behold, she prayeth! let the windows of heaven be opened, and the blessing be poured out."

By our sense of consistency, then—by our pity for nations perishing in ignorance and guilt—by our gratitude to Christ —by our own spiritual welfare—and by the dignity of our office, let us seek the effusion of the Spirit on the Christian Church. And, while before God in prayer, let us remember that in interceding for the Church, we are interceding for the world; for it is only through the instrumentality of His people that He proposes to save the world. Christians, realize in thought the responsibility of your office—you go to God as the earthly representatives of mankind—as intercessors for the world. You pass to the throne of grace through multitudes, myriads of human beings. Do you not hear them, as you go, imploring a place in your supplications? Do you not see all Africa assembled in your path—urging you to go to God for them—to describe their wrongs —to ask for them the blessings of the reign of Christ? And

before you have done pleading for Africa, China comes, with its untold myriads, entreating you to intercede for them. And while yet you are pleading for China, India comes, with its tale of lamentation and woe, and entreats you to speak for it—and can you refrain? And when you grow faint, they all combine their entreaties that you cry to God for them louder still—that you call in help—more intercessors, and more still—till all the Church be prostrate in prayer. And when you move to quit the throne of grace, they all entreat you not to leave them unrepresented before God. "Oh, if there be a God," they say, "and if prayer can reach Him, do not leave us thus, or we perish. Our only hope is in the God you worship—the Saviour you proclaim; pray that His saving health may be extended to us." Let Christians realize their office thus—and remember that in asking for the salvation of the world, they are seeking the consummation of the glory of Christ, and they would pray till the world was given into their hands.

Meantime, the whole creation prays—the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. It contains within itself principles and powers repressed by the curse of sin, but panting and praying to regain their freedom and to fulfil their destiny—and its prayer shall be heard. But, oh! there is an infinite power slumbering in the arm of God, waiting to be awoke by the prayers of the Church for the renovation of the world. And the time shall come when the efficacy of prayer shall be tried on a scale before unknown—when the voice of the Church shall incessantly cry, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord." And the time shall come when that voice shall be heard, and those prayers be answered. "Behold," saith He, "I make all things new!" At this moment that new creation stands in His prescient view. There are its fields of living green—its trees of life—and all its crystal streams. There are the nations of them that are saved, rejoicing before Him. His Church prayed

for Him continually—and now, "daily shall He be praised." His name shall endure for ever—His name shall be continued as long as the sun—and men shall be blessed in Him —all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen.

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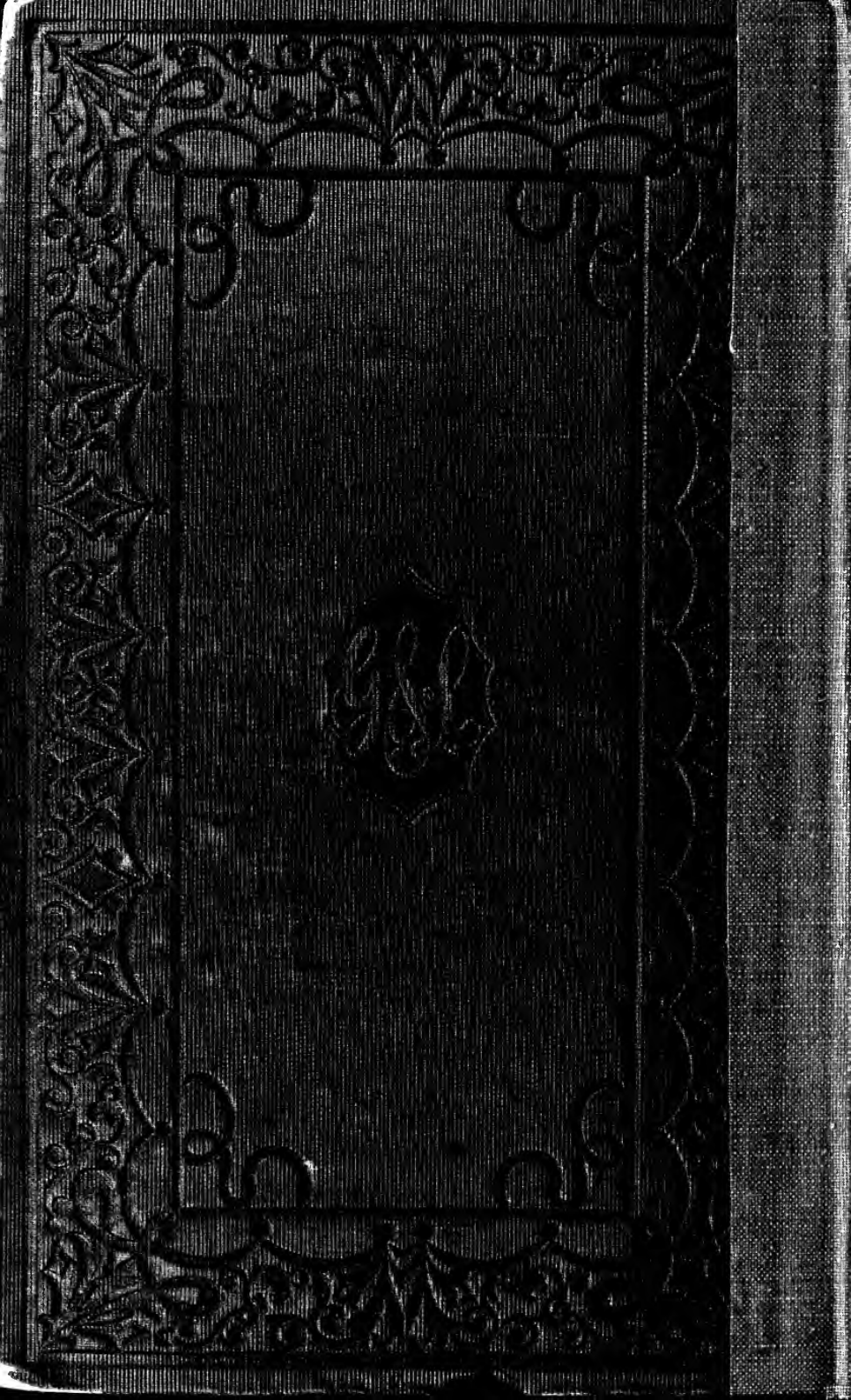
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